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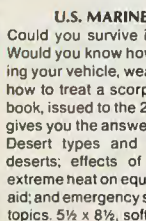
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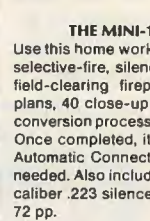
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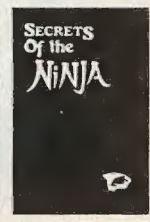
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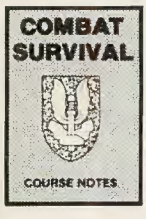
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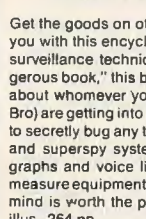
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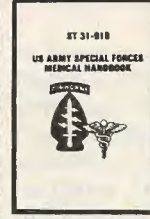
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COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

CONGRESS shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Even the most muscle-bound, knee-jerk conservative with hairy knuckles that drag the ground will admit that when it comes to propaganda, the communists are masters of the game. One of the best tricks to winning any contest is to beat your opponent with his own rules. They proved it in Vietnam.

Herein lies the double-edged dilemma facing everyone in the United States, liberals and conservatives, everyone who really believes in liberty and justice for all. It is the free nature of society in the United States that allows our enemies to threaten our way of life through propaganda, misinformation, espionage and terrorism. But to abridge any of our sacred freedoms would be to admit defeat.

I quote the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States just to illustrate this point in specific reference to Central America. U.S. citizens who are willing agents of communist empire-builders, and all the well-meaning, unwitting dupes they line up like lemmings, are on the march again. (Lenin's 1902 dictum referred to them as "useful idiots.")

They go under the guise of various groups. Probably best known is Witness for Peace. "Witless for Peace" is a more accurate description. Another is the Committee in

Solidarity with the People of El Salvador ... the group's acronym, CISPES, sounds a bit like "cess-pool." Then there is the National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People. If one doubts the direct ties of the NNSNP to Managua's communist government, call the Nicaraguan Embassy in Washington and ask for information on the country. The receptionist we talked to referred us to NNSNP.

These three groups and others are part of a United States network, the largest and most important part of a worldwide support structure that exists in over 40 countries. Their goal is to save the Sandinista

regime at all costs. They are attempting to do this by attacking the free press and free speech rights of private groups and individuals who oppose communist expansion in Central America.

I am proud to say that *Soldier of Fortune* Magazine is first and foremost on their list of targets. What is disturbing is that they are subverting the U.S. Constitution in an attempt to reach their ends.

If you go to one of the many demonstrations staged by these groups, you won't hear them mention the First Amendment. You'll hear unsubstantiated, emotional rhetoric about anti-communists "murdering mothers, children and campesinos" and "a government that murders non-combatants indiscriminately in a desperate attempt to maintain a structure of institutionalized violence."

The pot calls the kettle black. For suggestions on imposing institutionalized violence we would refer

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SOLDIER OF FORTUNE MAGAZINE

SOF

The Journal Of Professional Adventurers

SEPTEMBER/1985

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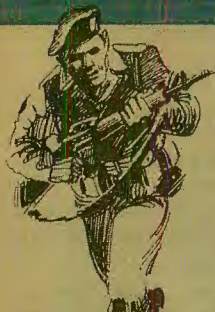
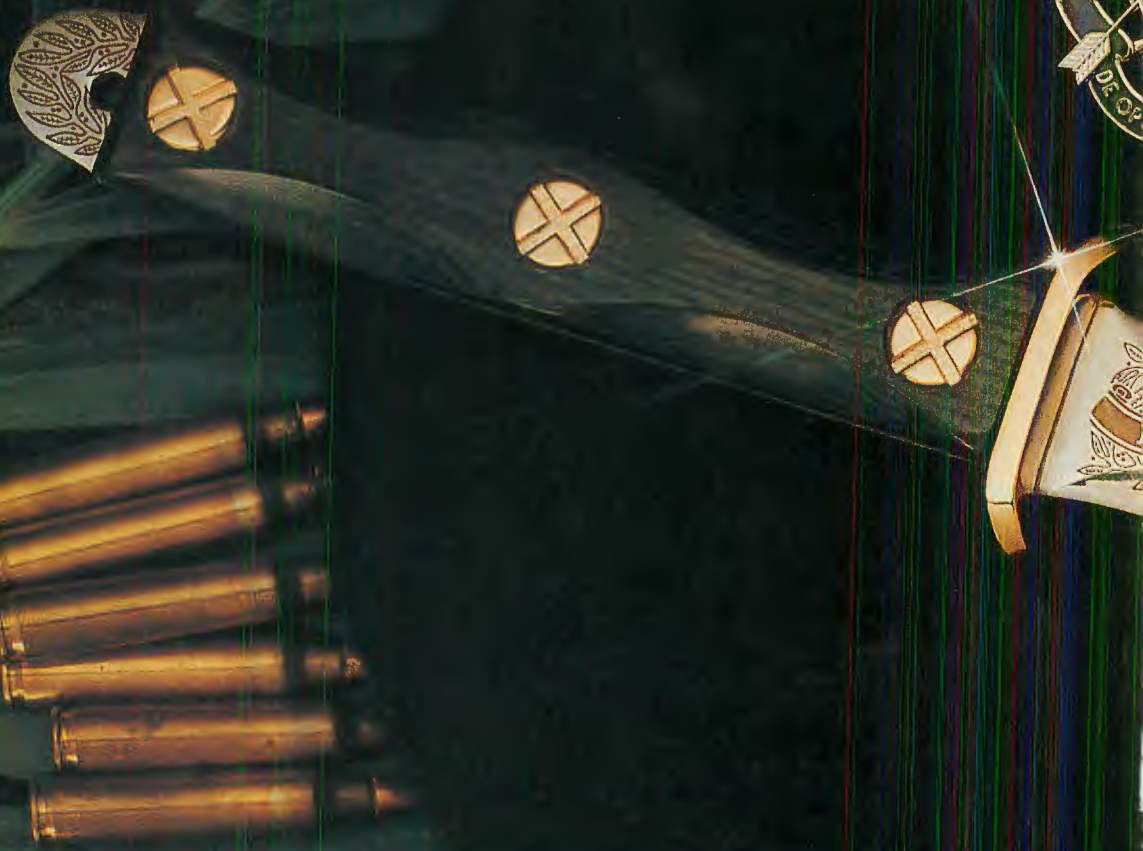


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COVER: Britain's empire has shrunk since the Gurkhas first fought for it. But John Bull still deploys these tough, disciplined troops. At home in jungles or mountains, Gurkhas have trained and fought from India to Washington State and from Monte Cassino to Belize. This tiny Central American nation — formerly British Honduras — has been threatened since its independence by Guatemala, and Gurkha maneuvers were part of the British response. Photo: David Mills

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THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SPECIAL FORCES COMMEMORATIVE



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*Put silver wings on my son's chest.
Make him one of America's best.
He'll be a man they'll test one day.
Have him win the Green Beret.*

by SSGT Barry Sadler

They're a special breed. Some of the toughest men in the world. Hand-picked volunteers. Taught to live off the land — to eat snakes if that is what it takes to survive to continue the mission to defend our freedom.

Some call them the world's most professional guerilla fighters. They're right. Special weapons. Special techniques. Special training. Special men. They are America's "Green Berets" — U.S. Army Special Forces.

Now, for the first time in history they are being honored by the issuance of a special commemorative private-purchase military fighting knife.

Founder of Special Forces Presents No. 1 to Special Warfare Museum

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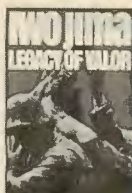
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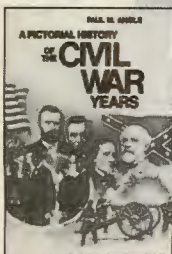
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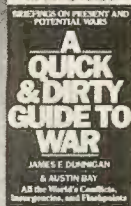
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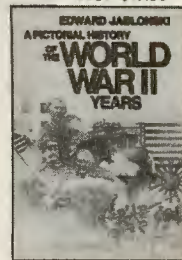
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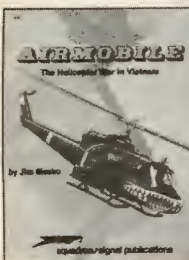
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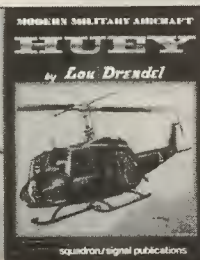
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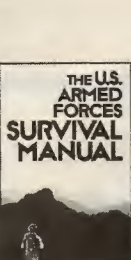
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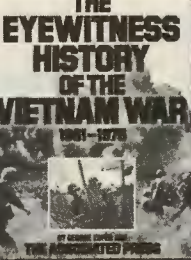
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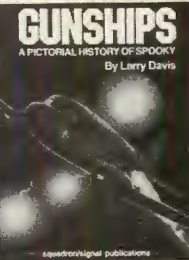
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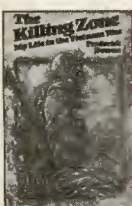
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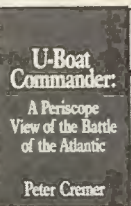
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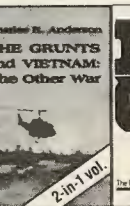
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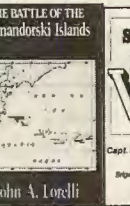
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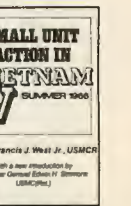
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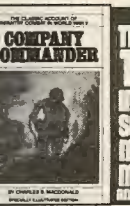
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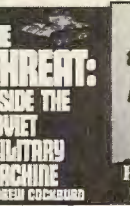
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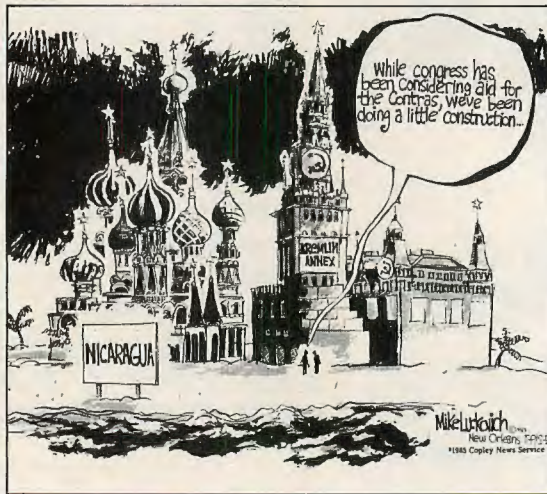
We just received the July issue on our little rock here off the Pacific Northwest coast. You made a boo-boo (FLAK, "Subscribers Take Note," SOF, July '85.) The U.S. Postal Service now forwards magazines for free. Everyone should know about this first real sign of customer service. Even though we live on a small island we at times are aware of things sooner than big-city folks.

Mr. and Mrs.
Peter Wangoe
Friday Harbor,
Wash.

We goofed. With the change in postal regulations (and yet another increase in the cost of services) that went into effect in February, your post office will now forward free of charge for 60 days all second-class mail such as magazines, provided the proper change-of-address form is filed. SOF Circulation Specialist Cherry Chavez noted that for an additional cost subscribers can have their magazines delivered via first-class mail, guaranteeing free forwarding by the post office for up to 18 months after a move. Ms. Chavez emphasized that it still takes the Subscription Department at least six weeks for a change of address to take effect. If a subscriber is moving, please send your new address and a mailing label from a recent copy of SOF to: Soldier of Fortune, Subscription Department, P.O. Box 348, Mt. Morris, IL 61054. Phone: (815) 734-4151.



FLAK



BAD BILL...

Sirs:

Some SOF readers may not be aware of perhaps the most insidious bill in Congress, the one targeting our private funding of Freedom Fighters in Central America. U.S. Reps. Mel Levine (D-Calif.) and Jim Leach (R-Iowa) have introduced a bill making it a criminal offense for private U.S. citizens to contribute any aid to freedom fighters and/or their refugee families . . . dollars, goods, or services. No medicine. No food. No nada. The bill introduced by Levine and Leach calls for penalties of up to three years in prison, a fine up to \$250,000, or both. I'm going to pick on Leach because he's the Republican. He is a House fifth-termer representing the first district, the area around Davenport. President Reagan cites the 11th Commandment: Thou shalt not speak ill of another Republican. Leach makes the strongest case yet for rescinding that rule. For one thing, he sponsored the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Resolution in the 98th Congress. As for the good Republicans of Davenport, they'd better check their water supply. Something is making them terminally stupid.

Robert G. Wheaton
San Antonio, Tex.

SOF was aware of this proposed legislation before these two Bozos announced it at a gala press conference. House bill number 1569 has been referred to the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, but a hearing had not been scheduled as this issue went to press in June. We urge readers to let their elected representatives know how they feel about this ridiculous idea. Write your congressional representative, c/o U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C. 20515.

CANADIANS WRITE ON M16/C7...

Sirs:

May I inform your readers of the latest developments on the M16A2 being adopted by the Canadian Armed Forces (See "Canuck M16A3," *Bulletin Board*, SOF, April '85). The designation for the new rifle is C7. It is being issued to combat units this year. It replaces the FN-C1 rifle, which was issued in 1958 to replace the Lee Enfield MII No. 4 C1 rifle, and also replaces the Sterling C1 submachine gun. The C2 version (LAR) will also be phased out by the new Squad (SAW) FN-LMG. The change for combat units will be complete by 1987.

Lieutenant W.B. Pitcairn
Regional Cadet Staff —
Atlantic
Canadian Armed Forces,
Nova Scotia

Thanks to a number of Canadian readers for keeping us current. We have learned that Canada's \$231 million project is going full-bore on production of almost 80,000 C7s, 1,500 C8 carbines for tank and APC crews and 6,750 C9 light machine guns. The prime contractor, Diemaco, Inc. of Kitchener, Ontario, has made modifications of the M16A2 under license from Colt Industries to produce the C7 and C8. The FN Minimi machine gun has been modified to become the Canadian C9. Les Industries Valcartier, Inc. of Valcartier, Quebec, will make the 5.56mm ammo used by all three weapons. The C7 and C8 will retain the full-auto selector replaced in the M16A2 by a three-shot-burst mode. Although a scope will be used, the Canadian versions will retain iron sights. Nylon magazines will be used instead of aluminum models used in the United States.



Continued on page 96

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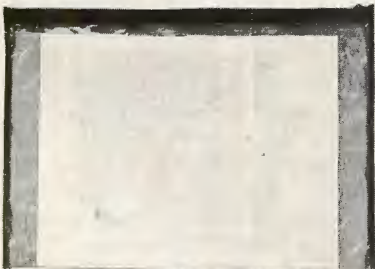


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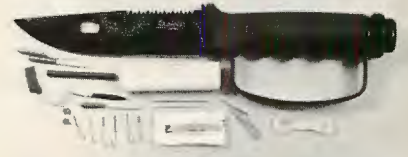
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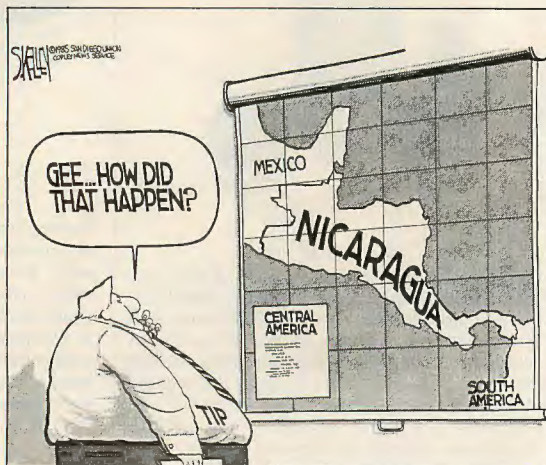
John Coleman, a Rhodesian veteran and occasional SOF contributing writer, has helped lead an invasion of Zimbabwe, according to the *Sunday Mail* in Harare. Imagine how surprised we were at the magazine when we called his home in California to get confirmation and he answered the phone. Laughing at the bogus report, Coleman allowed that removing the present oppressive regime in Zimbabwe is a good idea, but said he's too busy finishing college and doesn't have time to help.

By the time the rumor hit the press in South Africa, it typically had grown in proportion. It was reported that the *Soldier of Fortune* Association (whoever the hell they are) was helping destabilize the Workers' Paradise. We beg all SOF readers to let us know the outcome, since it is the first that SOF or Coleman have heard of the mission.

UGANDAN EMPLOYMENT...

Over a year ago we got several calls from readers who had been offered jobs in Uganda and wanted to know a little about what it's like to live there. The vets told us they'd been recruited as engineers through the Ugandan Embassy but had not been assigned specific tasks. We told them what we know about the place and asked that they get back in touch with us when they returned CONUS. SOF is still interested in any stories or tales you guys have to tell. Give us a call.

BULLETIN BOARD



SALVO INFO...

The U.S. Embassy in San Salvador has confirmed that a U.S. citizen working under private contract for the Salvadoran Air Force assisted government troops in the capture of a senior-level communist guerrilla commander, Miss Nadia Diaz. The private-sector military trainer, who had been instructing Salvadoran helicopter pilots on the use of night-vision devices, was invited to go on the mission by an officer with whom he is acquainted. The daylight raid resulted in the wounding and capture of Miss Diaz. The man, who was armed and wearing military clothing, reportedly restrained Miss Diaz when she tried to kill herself by jumping out of the helicopter after her capture. She is a commander in the Central American Revolutionary Workers' Party, one of five Marxist factions in the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMNLF).

Although Miss Diaz remained tight-lipped, another communist guerrilla leader — this one turned himself in to the El Salvadoran government — shed light on something President Reagan has been saying all along. Napoleon Romero confirmed in a news conference that communist insurgents, seeking to overthrow El Salvador's democratically elected government, receive more than 70 percent of their arms, ammunition and explosives in secret shipments from Nicaragua's Marxist regime. The remainder, he said, is bought by the rebels on the black market and stripped from the bodies of dead government troops. United States and Salvadoran officials long have claimed that the communist rebels get most of their war goods from Nicaragua, but no actual shipments have been intercepted. Romero said that some of the shipments come in small boats from Chinandega Province, Nicaragua, across the Gulf of Fonseca, and are brought ashore near Jiquilisco Bay in Usulután Province, El Salvador.

NO MORE TEACHERS' DIRTY LOOKS...

Nicaraguan parents are not happy with the brand of education brought to Nicaragua by the communist regime of the Sandinista National Liberation Front. The Union of Parents of Christian Families has publicly denounced their government for "meddling" in education by using textbooks that focus on Marxist-Leninist theory. UPCF President Sofonias Cisneros complained that "our families have been replaced by the state. In democratic countries, the father takes charge of his child's education. Here and in other communist nations, the state has taken that right." Her remarks were quoted in *La Prensa*, a daily published in Managua which is said to be least subject to government censorship.

Here are some literal textbook examples of the complaint. A geography book describes a mountain range as "where Commander Carlos Fonseca, a founder of the Sandinista Front, died fighting at the hands of the National Guard." A grammar textbook illustrates proper sentence structure with this jewel: "One has to fight to win victory under the direction of our organization, the FSLN." While U.S. kids learning simple math count brightly colored piles of apples and oranges, children in Nicaragua's school system count piles of rifles and grenades. It's good practice for a life under communist tyranny. Of course, recommended reading includes "Das Kapital" by Karl Marx, "Marx and Engels" by Lenin and many works by Cuban authors. But how could "Huckleberry Finn" or "Treasure Island" ever compete with light reading like "Technological Colonialism and the Imperialist Fight in Latin America"?

Too bad House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip Your Hat to the Commies" O'Neill and other deluded liberals in Congress can't go to school in Nicaragua. Then they'd get a *real* education.

CALLING ALL COLLECTORS...

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MERCS IN LATIN LAND?...

As the FDN waxes and unreformed ARDE wanes, names and faces are changing in the war for a free Nicaragua. According to Dr. John of Caribbean Basin Security Consultants (Dept. SOF, 147 W. 42nd St., Suite 603, New York, NY 10036) Eden Pastora's forces are in disarray and his influence has almost disappeared from the Free Nicaraguan forces. The author of "An American in ARDE" (SOF, Nov. '84) reports that Pastora's few remaining backers are selling AKs for food and medicine. A backer of Fernando "El Negro" Chamorro, Dr. John denies the current Miami rumors that he's recruiting a CIA-financed mercenary force.

PLOT SICKENS...

Word in South African military circles is that somebody is looking for up to 1,200 mercenaries for a little R&R in Mozambique. So far, the pros are disparaging the op, saying that a half-dozen men and a few hundred pounds of C-4 could do a number on FRELIMO attempts to build a viable economy in the Marxist African state. But the planned force is too big to move without detection, too big to supply discreetly, and too big to be recruited selectively.

And if the organizers think the South African government won't step in if things get out of hand they should remember the sentences for the members of the Seychelles coup team.

RHODIE REUNION FEATURES SMITH...

Former Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Douglas Smith will be an honored guest this fall at the Rhodesian Veteran's Association Reunion. The RVA is soliciting contributions to help defray expenses for Smith's trip to Lake Tahoe, Calif., from his home in Zimbabwe, according to RVA representative John Lukman, who met with Smith in November at the latter's home. The reunion is scheduled for Oct. 18-20. Those interested in attending should call Tim Carmody at (415)564-0261 or John Coleman at (818)782-9413 for more information. Or write: Rhodesian Veteran's Association, Dept. SOF, 2022 Taraval St./Suite 600, San Francisco, Calif. 94116.

BLACK, WHITE & RED ALL OVER...

Soldier of Fortune continues a growing tradition by making fine editorial fodder for communist publications the world over. Russia's Communist Party newspaper, *Izvestia*, fired their latest volley of ink by labeling the magazine as "an unofficial body of hired murderers... doing business on blood." In attacking Publisher Robert K. Brown for his decision to reprint and distribute the CIA manual on guerrilla warfare to Freedom Fighters in Central America, *Izvestia* claimed that "he secretly placed an order with a printing house in Spain for 500 copies of the manual." We went down and asked our friendly job printer, Al, if he'd opened another shop we hadn't heard about. Al laughed when he read a copy of the *Izvestia* fiction, said he'd sure like to expand; but no, he hasn't opened any print shops in Spain.

SOF CONVENTION IN MANAGUA?...

If the Nicaraguan Freedom Fighters have taken Managua by the end of the SOF Convention, SOF will pick up the cost of a three-day round trip from Las Vegas, Nevada, to Managua and back for all SOF conventioners. R.K. Brown says, "You won't have to worry about getting your cammies through customs."



Russian soldiers in Afghanistan enjoy U.S. products such as cigarettes unavailable to Freedom Fighters.

MOST FAVORED NATION?...

"I'd walk a mile for a commie." To comfort or kill him? We're not sure which. But that is the impression we get from the U.S. government's baffling habit of saying one thing and doing another in foreign policy. Afghanistan is a prime example.

Congress has spent \$400 million since the Soviet invasion of December 1979 to help the Afghan Freedom Fighters overthrow the unpopular communist military regime. Yet that regime still enjoys international trading status as a "most favored nation" of U.S. commerce. This agreement bestows upon Afghanistan's illegitimate, Soviet-imposed government preferential exemptions to many U.S. tariffs and port taxes. And these exemptions go far beyond such "essential" goods as automotive and aircraft parts, computers and petroleum products.

Millions of dollars worth of U.S. cigarettes — considered a status symbol in most of the Eastern Hemisphere — are enjoyed by Soviet soldiers who kill the same Holy Warriors we support with our tax dollars. An alert SOF reader intercepted a pack of L&M cigarettes marked for delivery to the communist government of

Continued on page 98

SNIPER. The word even *sounds* deadly.

It should. A sniper is more than your best infantryman. He should be smarter, better trained, a more accurate marksman, better disciplined and more proficient in fieldcraft than any other man in his unit. An infantryman has many coequal responsibilities, but a sniper's talent and training are honed to one fine, polished point: killing one man with one bullet.

The sniper has other missions, of course. He trains, he observes, he probes and he reports. But his real job is to hit high-priority targets. And what is the one tool that distinguishes the precision combat shooter and helps him hit his targets? The telescopic sight.

Unless some grunt has picked up a war trophy, if you see an enemy with a scoped rifle, binoculars or spotting scope, land-nav equipment and a pistol, that's a sniper. (Shoot him, if you're a sniper!) Those are the tools of his trade. But that scope is the giveaway because his job is to apply precise fire to selected targets.

The telescopic sight can appear on one of three different types of rifle. Sniper systems come in weights: light, medium and heavy. Short-range (battlefield) snipers use the light system. Long-range snipers use medium or heavy systems.

Short-range systems weigh between six and eight pounds and consist of the issue infantry rifle for that unit and a low-power telescopic sight. The Colt 3x and rubber-armored Beeman 2.5x SS-1 scopes (Beeman Precision Arms, Dept. SOF, 47-R Paul Drive, San Rafael, CA 94903) are ideal on an M16. The lightweight system enables a battlefield sniper — protected from identification and location by his unit's fire — to address multiple important targets with quick, accurate, *effective* fire. Priority targets are usually hard to pick on the modern battlefield, but they are there: officers, NCOs, radiomen, heavy weapons crews and — of course — other snipers.

The light system gives the sniper access to targets between 300 and 400 meters. His weapon is easily capable of three minutes of angle (MOA) accuracy, and that translates into a nine-inch group at 300 yards. That means he can count on a body hit at 400 to 500 yards, the first shot in the torso kill-zone at 300, and a head-shot on a stationary target within 200 yards.

Medium systems increase range, but cut mobility and increase the likelihood that the sniper will be identified by his unusual equipment. Medium systems weigh between eight and ten pounds. They are characterized by more powerful (four- to six-power or even



COMBAT WEAPONCRAFT

by Jack Thompson

Reach Out and Touch Someone



WELL-TRAVELED

Jack Thompson's military career has touched the U.S., Central America, Africa and Southeast Asia. He has been a D.I., a civilian weapons trainer, a bodyguard, a private security adviser, an expert witness in weapons-related trials and — of course — an infantryman.

variable-power) scopes of at least two MOA accuracy. Most medium sniper rifles will be the heavier caliber military weapons of a couple of decades ago, the G3, FN-FAL, dressed-up M14 (designated M21) and the various medium-barreled bolt-actions such as the British L42A1, and U.S. Ruger M77 and Remington M700.

Medium-weight sniper systems allow precise fire out to 600 meters. Heavier weapons reduce shake and barrel whip, and more powerful optics allow target identification. Two MOA accuracy translates into head shots out to 300 meters, torso kill-zone shots at 500 and easy torso hits at 600 meters.

Logically, longer distances require a heavier bullet propelled by a more powerful charge. The classic military cartridges from the beginning of the twentieth century are perfect for this purpose: .303 British, 7.92 Mauser, .30-06 and 7.62 Russian Rimmed. The latter-day, ball-powder descendant of the .30-06 — 7.62 NATO — fits well into this role.

Heavyweight systems are a true spe-

Salvadoran Airborne Bn. sniper has the basic tools of his trade.

Lightweight system incorporates Colt scope and camouflaged M16.

Photo: Jack Thompson

cialist's tool, since they apply precise fire to man-sized targets out to 1,000 meters. Characterized by heavy barrels, hand-tuned bolt actions, set triggers and powerful auto-ranging optics, heavy rifles start at 10 pounds, may weigh over 20, and are capable of at least one MOA accuracy.

Preferably, these bruisers are chambered in non-military calibers like 7mm Magnum or .338 Magnum. Long-range punch is what you want. Killing power is so important in these specialized applications that sniping systems are known in .50-caliber Browning and 20mm.

At, say, half a minute accuracy, amazing shots become commonplace. Head hits are theoretically possible at the upper limits of the heavy rifle's range. But as most of you know, at ranges over 600 meters, hits and misses become a function of gauging range, judging light and compensating for wind. Sniping in this class is more of an art than a technology, whatever hardware you carry.

No matter what the hardware, what really makes a sniper is the man and his training. He must observe, shoot, conceal himself, know where he is, move and report what he sees. Without such skills and discipline the sniper is just a mighty lonely casualty. ☒

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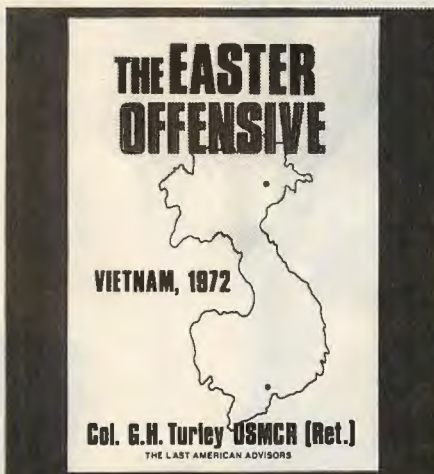
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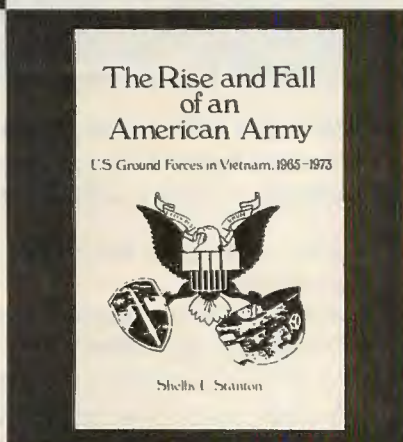
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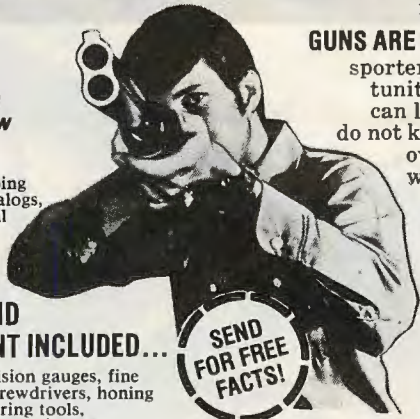
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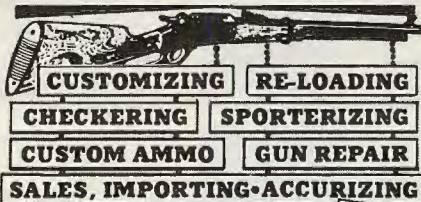
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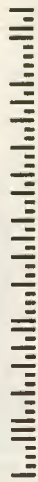
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ESOTERIC ARMORY

If you want a more obscure collection of weaponry than anyone else in your National Guard unit, you need Joe Steele's catalog. M&M Enterprises has become a major martial arts supplier.

Aside from his old reliable assortment of crossbows, firearms accessories and knives, Steele's catalog now features a full line of Oriental weapons for use or display. His shuriken were used to prepare the Battle Blades column this month (see page 22) and the halls of SOF have hardly been safe since a box

ADVENTURE QUARTERMASTER



of ninja weapons appeared in the mail.

Pictured are: Ninja Claws (\$22),
Ninja Shoge Hook (\$20) and
Hide-a-Chain Bakuhsatsu Gama (\$20).

M&M Enterprises, Special Weapons
and Martial Arts Supply, Dept. SOF,
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POCKET PROTECTION

Disguised as a plastic yawara/keychain, the Ju-jo offers an unusual range of defense and offense that fits in your pocket. Usable as a conventional yawara, the keyring pops out as a handle for a soft nylon lanyard. The lanyard works for blocks, locks and strangles.

Tested by Special Forces, the SERE Committee, Fort Bragg's Military Police, SEALs, Rangers, Force Recon and British SAS, the Ju-jo is constructed of DuPont Zytel plastic and manufactured by Choate Machine & Tool Co. The device has proved sturdy, simple and practical. But the most impressive thing about the Ju-jo is its "owner's manual."

Most gimmicky self-defense tools come with a sketchy instruction sheet containing extravagant claims instead of

hard information. Not so with the Ju-jo. Though the instructions are a bit expensive for the private purchaser, Dr. John J. Lewis — developer of the Ju-jo — has produced a video cassette of a dojo training session. The lecture accompanying each demonstration is impromptu and the delivery is a bit wooden, but Lewis' competitors should take note that he has a better idea. And they should realize that this training videotape will probably result in increased sales to police and military.

For information and prices contact ParaCombatives, Dept. SOF, 2439 Prospect, Evanston, IL 60201. Phone: (312)864-0383.

ORGANIC LRRPS

Spirulina has been a cult food of the '80s, and is becoming a combat ration for the Afghan guerrillas.

SOF staff have used the blue-green algae-based vitamins and food supplements and found them satisfactory for our purposes. The rave review comes from Dr. Bashir Zikria — co-founder of the Afghan National Liberation Front and Professor of Surgical Nutrition at Columbia University — who has recommended Light Force's line of vitamins and spirulina powder as a travel ration for mujahideen. Meanwhile, Light Force Company has donated \$100,000 retail value of spirulina powder to the Afghan Freedom Fighters.

SOF commends Tony Gray and Light Force for their exceptional generosity.

Pictured are Light Force's one-pound jar of spirulina powder (\$49), Stress Pack vitamins (\$18.99) and Power Pack (\$27.99), distributed by Peak Performance Network, Dept. SOF, 2270 Diamond Number 216, San Francisco, CA 94127. Phone: (415) 333-3798. ☒



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SIXTH ANNUAL SOF CONVENTION AND COMBAT WEAPONS MILITARY EXPO



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE will hold its sixth annual convention at the Sahara Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada, 18-22 September 1985.

Preregistration fee is \$100. This provides free admission to all seminars, Combat Weapons Military Expo, the banquet and all convention activities, with the exception of optional events. Write SOF CONVENTION '85, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306.

COMBAT WEAPONS MILITARY EXPO — Weapons, equipment and militaria vendors will display their wares on 20-22 September. Get a close-up, hands-on view of everything from aircraft to SCUBA gear, ammo to armor, and starlight scopes to IR camouflage. For information contact William Weber, 17100 Norwalk Blvd., Suite 116, Cerritos, CA 90701.

FIREPOWER DEMONSTRATION — SOF's weapons-demo team will once again stage the rock 'n' roll show on the firing line. Small-arms expert Peter Kokalis will scatter the sand with machine guns of nearly every description. And blast-master John Donovan will demonstrate his explosive toys.



SEMINARS — For the less adventurous, SOF will offer a fascinating schedule of seminars. Speakers will conduct information exchanges on such topics as knife fighting, automatic weapons, sniping, the French Foreign Legion, Afghanistan, Central America and the Middle East. And better military intel than you'll get anywhere else without a security clearance. Free to conventioners — \$25 for non-conventioners.

THREE-GUN MATCH — SOLDIER OF FORTUNE's action-packed Three-Gun Match, a world-class competition involving skill with pistol, rifle and shotgun will be held at the Desert Sportsman Rifle and Pistol Club, 18-20 September. Entrance is by invitation only and competitors must write for an application. Send SASE to Bill Brooks, 4901 Indian trail, Wilmington, NC 28403.

PUGIL-STICK TOURNAMENT — Gather every evening at poolside to see bloodthirsty bayonet fighters swing at each other to the DI's exhortations. Five dollars per game will put you in the running. Sign up at the convention.

OPERATION HEADHUNTER — Tackle rough desert terrain with this strenuous five-mile military obstacle course. Headhunters must negotiate the course by running, climbing, and rappelling with seven five-pound sandbags on their backs and only with the help of map, compass and knife. Limit 70 conventioners. Only the fit need apply. For information send a large SASE to: ALECTO Group, P.O. Box 253, Elkhorn, NE 68022.

SCUBA CLASS — SOF's underwater-demolitions expert John Donovan will conduct SCUBA classes for the beginning diver. All you need is fins, mask and snorkel — we'll provide the rest. Contact John Donovan, P.O. Box 486, Danver, IL 61732 and be PADI certified.



RAPPELLING SEMINARS — Professional wall-crawler Fritz Borchardt will once again be leaping and bounding through his exciting rappelling classes. And for those who participated last year and couldn't get enough, a tactical-rappelling class is being offered. Contact Fritz at P.O.Box 548, Nederland, CO 80466. Please send SASE.

PARACHUTING COURSE — Would-be winged warriors be warned! The Phantom Airborne Division will be conducting parachuting courses concurrently with the Convention. Two-day course for novices and returning jumpers. For information contact Cliff Albright, Phantom Division, P.O. Box 22505, Memphis, TN 38122.



THERE'S a starry constellation of shuriken. From two-inch steel snowflakes to spikes that would scare a ten-penny nail, they're all short-range throwing weapons covered by that one Japanese word. Think of any regular shape: stars, swastikas, triangles, crosses, needles and squares. Most likely, somebody has already made a shuriken with that profile. But how effective are they, and what are they supposed to do? Finally, what do martial arts experts think of them?

To get my opinion out of the way right at first, let me say that shuriken are less-than-ideal edged weapons. About the *kindest* thing I can say about such metallic confetti is that they contribute to ninja mystique.

But don't misunderstand me. I wouldn't *want* to get hit with one, because the thing would *hurt*.

Hardly any responsible person seems to think they're very lethal. In fact, I believe the real value of the shuriken lies in its power to intimidate. After all, since they're used by ninjas, shuriken must be bad news. Right?

This line of reasoning leads me to believe that shuriken were employed by the ninja precisely *because* they look intimidating. And it helped that he could easily carry a dozen of the little persuaders hidden on his person. But you can forget about Hollywood images of the throwing star's knockdown power. At most, the shuriken will distract, injure or disable an opponent at ranges well under 30 feet. I can't think why I would want to carry one.

Unlike a variety of knives that can function as tool or weapon, the shuriken is of limited use in a survival scenario. It is absolutely useless until you throw it. And, obviously, its primary function was to distract a pursuer while the ninja escaped.

Just so you don't think that this is the raving of an opinionated knife maker, I'd like to recommend Sid Campbell's book *Ninja Shuriken Throwing* (\$12 from Paladin Press, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1307, Boulder, CO 80306, 303-443-7250). Campbell offers some candid comments and insights on the subject of combat effectiveness of the shuriken. On the subject of facing an armed opponent, Campbell says: "If you are only armed with the shuriken, it is advisable to put as much distance as possible between you and your adversary in the shortest possible time." I might add that I think that's damned good advice.

While I wouldn't trade one good knife for a sackful of shuriken, I do think they have some — if limited — value. The things make good toys. Now, don't get upset, I *like* toys. I own a number of toys, and enjoy each and every one.



BATTLE BLADES

by Bill Bagwell

Shuriken: Stars That Stick



Great toys, but a little shy of being weapons. Samples courtesy of M&M Enterprises, Dept. SOF, Box 445, Island Lake, IL 60042, (815)455-3403.

As toys, shuriken can be fun to throw. And in the process of developing skill and accuracy with shuriken you also develop your own coordination and motor skills. You could do the same thing with a baseball, but there is something particularly satisfying about throwing something that sticks when it hits.

If my argument to this point seems a bit tongue-in-cheek, it's well and good. That's because I feel the Oriental mind that dreamed up this use for small pieces of scrap iron had his tongue firmly fixed in his cheek as well. Most Oriental weapons are effective and efficient employed within their design parameters. The shuriken, on the other hand, is at best only a marginally effective weapon.

No doubt about it, should a secretary discover a man dressed in black rifling her files, a well-placed shuriken would probably dissuade her from trying to retrieve her paperwork. On the other hand, a whole fist-full of shur-

iken aren't going to faze a trained and armed adversary if he catches you in the cookie jar. Just use your common sense.

And applying common sense to weapon design, it's easy to see the multi-pointed shuriken is self-limiting. Simply put, the more points it has, the less it can penetrate. (Try this in your kitchen with an icepick and a fork, if you don't believe me.) And the steep included angles of shuriken I've seen make them difficult to get really sharp. Let's face it. If an edged weapon can't penetrate or slice, it just isn't going to be very lethal. If this weren't enough to make one take a jaundiced view of the throwing star, then consider it as a projectile weapon on top of its mechanical inadequacies.

Judged as a projectile weapon, the shuriken is a dismal failure. Many primitive projectile weapons are efficient: bows, crossbows, catapults and slings all did their killing. The throwing star is highly unlikely to kill under any circumstances, and with a maximum range of 30 feet, it is one of the shortest-range projectile weapons in history. Any man killed by a shuriken just ran completely out of luck. ✘

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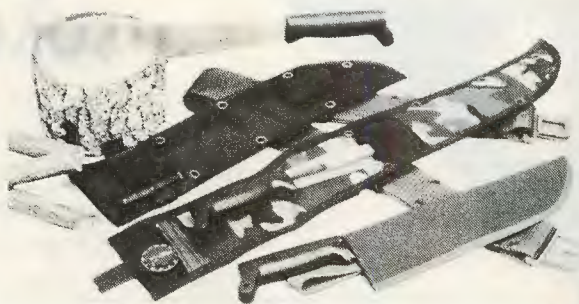
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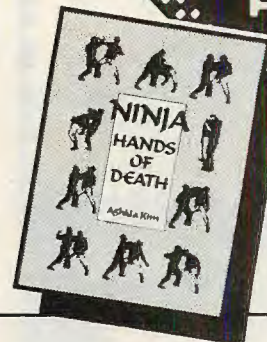
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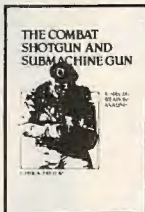


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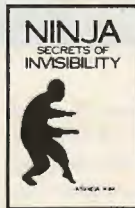
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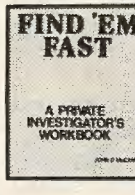


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I WAS THERE

by Joe Coyle

Coming of Age at Phu Loc II



THE tall coconut palms waved in the late morning breeze which carried the soft whisper of the sea to our straining ears. Relentless, brutal rays from the sun beat down on us from a cloudless sky and sweat stung our eyes. Throaty cries of unseen tropical birds echoing throughout the jungle made us jumpy. Were they really birds — or enemy troops signaling our presence?

We were surrounded by beauty and tropical splendor but no one was enjoying the scenery. In the villages we passed, women and children silently observed our passage from the shadows of their thatch-roofed hooches. They could sense the danger too.

It was harvest time in Vietnam but no farmers were working the patchwork of rice paddies in this area. That told us all was not right in the area around the villages of Phu Loc I and Phu Loc II. The dikes we had been forced to cross to avoid sloshing through the muddy paddies gave way to soft sand and that's when we found out what was wrong here.

An angry bark of machine-gun fire brought the answer. We were stunned by the sight of our platoon sergeant falling under the fire to lie still in the soft sand. Bienvenido Pagan was a small, cocky Puerto Rican that we all re-

spected. And now he was gone.

My platoon instinctively scrambled for cover and began to return fire as we had done so many times in the recent past. This time we were getting the worst of the contact. We were dying in the sand on the other side of Phu Loc's rice paddies. In most of our recent contact, we had the upper hand. This was different.

The recon platoon of the 1st Cavalry Division that I had joined in late December 1966 had suffered no casualties. All of our contacts had provided us with nothing more than enemy body counts, adrenalin rushes, and war stories. Now we were locked in the paradox of a Tet ceasefire and taking dead and wounded at an astonishing rate. And we could not clear missions for fire support.

The classic horseshoe-shaped ambush into which we had allowed ourselves to wander now had us firmly in its grip. Unyielding gunfire was slowly chewing us up. Our Cav patches gleamed like beacons in the jungle and I wished to God we had the subdued ones then.

As medevac ships airlifted the wounded out, we were left using the dead as cover. The tall succulents that littered the area were not stopping bul-

lets. We fired at quivering palm fronds in the tops of the surrounding trees and were occasionally rewarded by a glimpse of a body falling from a tree. Our dead were piling up at a staggering rate. Sorrow and grief would come later. There was no time to think about it now.

Sounds died. Odors ceased to permeate my senses. My vision became tunneled. My concentration intensified. The war became for me — as it eventually does for everyone in combat — not a fight for any particular doctrine or cause. It had become a fight for survival. The will to live far outweighs any dedication to principle. And war, I was quickly finding out, had few principles.

I felt no pain when it finally happened. There were simply dull thumps in my shoulder and knee. Suddenly I was lying 10 feet back from where I had been and draining blood into the soft sand. The next flash of recall has me being lifted onto a slick and on my way out of the death-trap at Phu Loc. I remember the heat from the nape strike that eventually came. I remember the ringing in my ears from the roar of F-100s firing 20mm cannon into the enemy positions.

And I remember looking into the pale faces of my platoon-mates who didn't make it out of there alive. I was glad to be a survivor. I was glad to be wounded and out of the fighting for awhile.

Two months later as I lay in a hospital bed in Tokyo, I read in *The Stars and Stripes* that much of the remainder of my platoon had died. During the months that followed I did a lot of thinking about where I had been and what I had been doing. Never for one second since I first set foot in Vietnam have I experienced anything but pride in my small role in that conflict. But others saw it differently.

I spent several hours sitting next to a young woman on the plane home from Ft. Lewis, Washington and she never spoke to me. The stewardess didn't offer me the complimentary drink she served everyone else. When I landed in San Diego on that cool night in December of 1967, the only hugs I got were from Mom and Dad. The uniform I was — and still am — so proud of brought cold stares from civilians. It was as if the 1st Cav patch on my right shoulder, which I considered a badge of honor, was a brand of infamy.

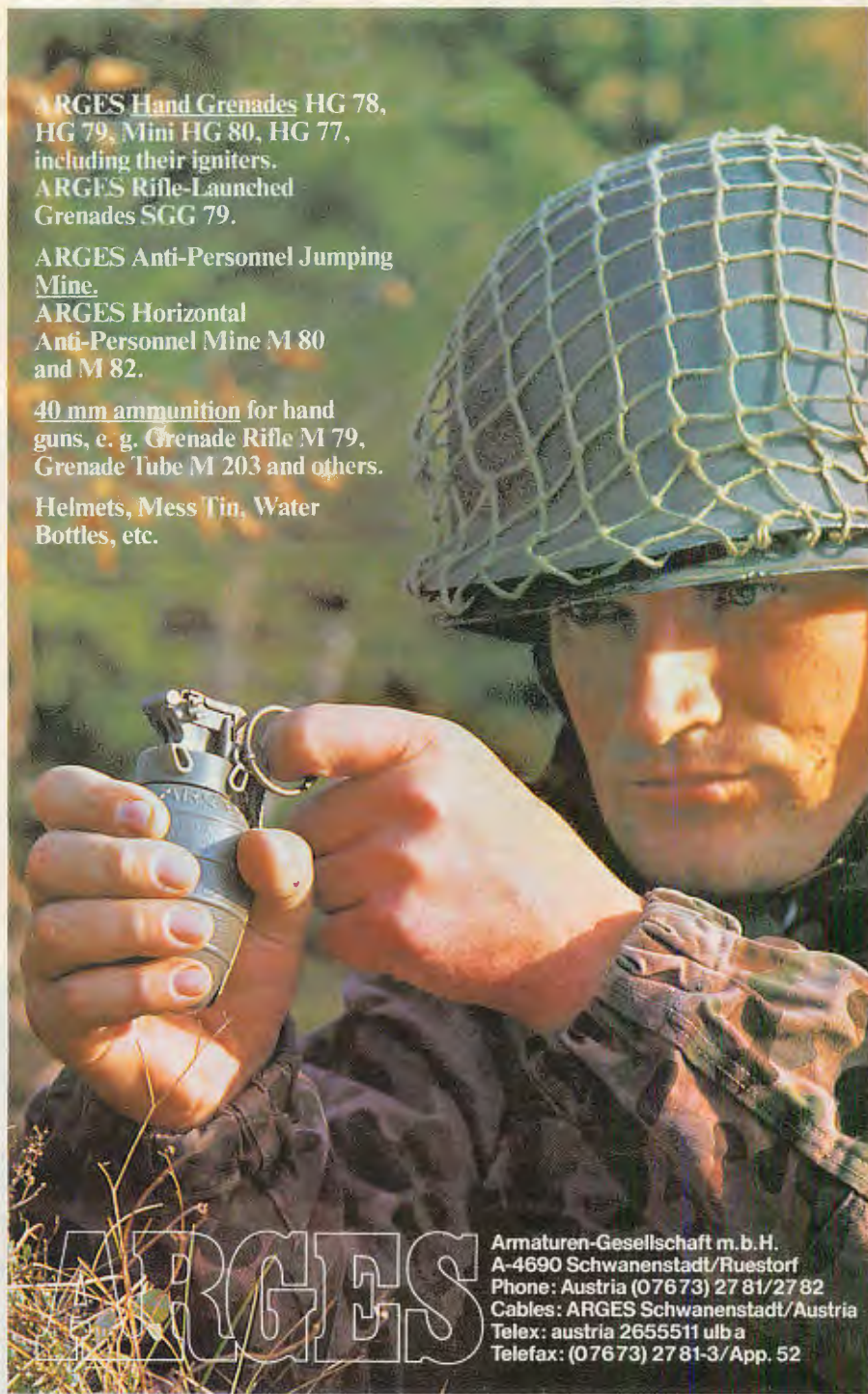
I grew up in Vietnam. The fight at Phu Loc II was the rite of passage. I am a better man today because of my experiences in-country. And I like to think that there are several hundred thousand American citizens today who are better citizens because we were there. ✕

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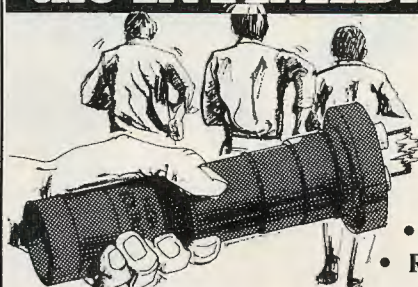


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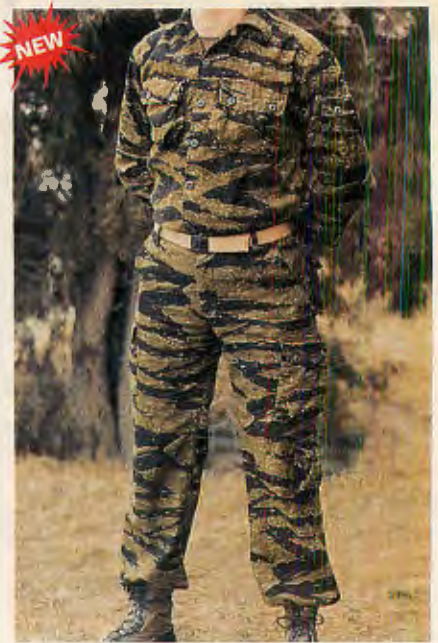
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OVER the past eight years, SOF's FULL AUTO column has provided the world's most widely read forum for the discussion of automatic weapons. I have been writing FULL AUTO for the last half of that period and have noticed the column attracts a wide range of interest levels from collectors to technologists. Collectors represent a significant proportion of those who follow FULL AUTO each and every month and those with a special interest in German World War II weaponry are among the most intense fans.

That deserves consideration and this month's column is devoted to a most fascinating and important military small-arm development of this century — the world's first true assault rifle — the German MP44/StG44.

The advantages of an intermediate cartridge — the assault rifle's most salient characteristic — were first proposed by a German officer during World War I. In 1934 a developmental contract was placed with Polte Werke of Magdeburg for a cartridge less powerful than the standard 7.92x33 Kurz (short) cartridge.

In 1938 C.G. Haenel of Suhl, Thuringia was given a contract to develop a rifle which would feature a simple mechanism, be no heavier than the current infantry rifle, have a shorter length, be controllable in full-auto-assault fire, be able to deliver precision semiauto fire, have a trajectory similar to the 98k out to 600 meters and prove reliable in both arctic and desert environments. Stamped-sheet-metal components were to be used wherever possible. Fifty prototypes were required by July 1942.

Working independently, the well-known firm of Carl Walther in Zella-Mehlis entered the so-called *Maschinenkarabiner* (machine carbine) Program in 1940. They received a government contract in 1941 to produce 200 prototypes for test by August 1942. Walther was directed to utilize the 30-rd. magazine designed at Haenel by the famous Hugo Schmeisser.

Original plans called for large-scale production of both designs. The Haenel rifle was designated as the MKb 42(H) and the Walther design as the MKb 42(W). During field trials in 1942, the Walther design was eliminated.

Confusion concerning the nomenclature of the MP44/StG44 series runs rampant. It is widely held that Hitler himself was responsible. In 1943 he prohibited further development, citing the need for a long-range rifle in Africa, the existence of 8 billion rounds of 7.92x57mm ammunition in inventory and his own experiences in World War I. To evade his prohibition, work continued under the subterfuge designation MP43 (*Maschinen Pistole* or



FULL AUTO

by Peter G. Kokalis

Assault Rifle's German Genesis



StG44: The world's first assault rifle — and still one of the best — carried through Emma-Gees' full-auto fun house by Sam Urschel.

Machine Pistol). Early in 1944, three generals, decorated personally by the Führer for service on the Eastern Front, requested production and fielding of the MP43. After reviewing the preliminary field reports, Hitler directed priority development in August 1944. The one-year delay in mass production brought the MP44 (the nomenclature was changed in 1944 from MP43 to MP44 for unknown reasons) into the war too late to play a real role on the battlefield. To publicize its role in the assault, the weapon was redesignated as the StG44 (*Sturmgewehr* — Assault Rifle) with great fanfare and publicity late in 1944.

The StG44 is gas-operated without a regulator and features a gas block and sheet-metal gas tube mounted on top of the barrel. It fires from the closed-bolt position. The bolt locks by tilting downward at the rear and engaging a locking shoulder fastened to the bottom of the receiver just aft of the magazine well. The rear of the bolt is hook-shaped on the top and faces forward. This arrangement interfaces with another hook under the rear of the piston extension, facing back. When gas moves up through the barrel's vent and strikes the piston's face, the two

hooks engage, lifting the bolt up and rearward. The piston is permanently attached to the piston extension. So is the retracting handle (located on the left side of the receiver) which reciprocates with each movement of the bolt/piston group. The piston shaft has 11 radial fins to the rear of its head. The gas operation is of the long-stroke type.

The machined bolt is serial-numbered to the rifle and was probably hand-fit for correct headspacing. The spring-loaded extractor pivots on a removable pin. As the bolt must rise and drop during unlocking/locking, the ejector groove is large to permit clearance by the ejector which is fixed to the interior of the receiver above the rear of the magazine well. The firing pin is not spring-loaded. Instead of being struck directly by the hammer, a large-faced plunger mounted on the bottom portion of the piston extension does the job. This plunger cannot reach the rear of the firing pin unless the bolt is completely locked. By this means, firing out of battery is prevented.

As the bolt group moves rearward, the empty case is extracted and thrown out the ejection port cut into the right side of the receiver, cocking the hammer during the bolt's rearward stroke. The port has a spring-loaded dust cover.

The single recoil spring is partially housed in the buttstock. There is no buffer. On the forward stroke, the compressed recoil spring drives the bolt/piston group forward, stripping a round from the magazine and chambering it. The piston and its extension continue to move forward after the bolt reaches the limit of its forward travel. At this time a cam on the piston extension forces the rear of the bolt downward against the locking shoulder.

That's all quite conventional but 40 years ago, the StG44's stamped-sheet-metal receiver was not. Reinforcement ribs, as well as the bolt/piston extension guides, were pressed into the receiver body to which other components were pinned and welded. The 16.5-inch, four-groove barrel, with a right-hand twist, was pinned to the receiver body.

The laminated wood buttstock has no buttplate, but there are sheet-metal

Continued on page 78

BATTLE DRESS UNIFORM (BDU)

Originally worn in the jungle of Vietnam, the general features of the GI combat battle fatigues are as follows:

Pants—cut full for complete freedom of movement these feature drawstring cuffs and adjustable pull tab waists. For maximum utility, they are constructed with 6 pockets, 2 of which are large bellowed cargo pockets, on the thigh.

Shirt/Jacket—also cut full, these rugged versatile fatigues feature 4 pockets (2 breast pockets and 2 huge bellowed hip).

Sizes—military waist sizes are XS, S, M, L, XL. Length sizes are regular and long. Not all length sizes are available in a particular style. For best fit, please tell us your waist, chest, inseam and height and we'll try to find the right size for you. Remember that jungle fatigues fit completely different than a pair of jeans.

Woodland Camouflage Pattern BDU's—GENUINE GI

These 50% cotton, 50% nylon fatigues are the latest issue to all services. In these Woodland BDU's the military has combined complete utility and freedom of movement into garments made to last for years of hard wear.

The fabric combination of breathable, comfortable cotton combined with the nylon seems to make them indestructible. The seat and knees in the pants, and the elbows in the jackets have been reinforced. The bellows pockets are even roomier than the jungle fatigues that were the predecessor to the BDU.

These are a best bet for the hunter, sportsman or outdoorsman who wants clothing that he can depend on season after season. **Brand New.**

Specify: Jacket or Pants \$30.00/each; \$57.50/set

Desert Camo Pattern BDU's—GENUINE GI

These day desert pattern BDU's are the current issue to the US Rapid Deployment Force who have been trained for warfare in the Middle East. These are designed exactly like the Woodland Camouflage Pattern BDU's described above, complete with reinforced knees and seat. **Brand new. Specify: Jacket or Pants \$34.00/each; \$65.00/set.**

Olive Drab (OD) Green Jungle Fatigues—GENUINE GI

These were one of the first jungle fatigues used in Vietnam. They were phased out in the late 1960's and early 1970's. These 100% cotton ripstop fatigues are currently being manufactured under a government contract to the original military specs. **Brand new. Specify: Jacket or Pants \$30.00/each; \$57.50/set.**

Tiger Stripe Camouflage Pattern BDU's

These are made by a US Government contractor to military specs. The tiger stripe pattern is true. They are reinforced as the Woodland Pattern BDU's above. Regular lengths only (no longs). 50% cotton 50% nylon.

Brand new. Specify: Jacket or Pants \$34.00/each; \$65.00/set.

Solid Black BDU's

A favorite of SWAT teams, these fatigues were manufactured in the US by a government contractor to military specs. 50% cotton/50% nylon, these are reinforced as the GI Woodland Pattern above. Regular lengths only (no longs). **Brand new.**

Specify Jacket or Pants \$34.00/each; \$65.00/set.

GENUINE GI



Urban Camouflage Pattern BDU's -

A strikingly different camouflage, our urban camo may be the SWAT alternative to the solid black or woodland camo. The Urban pattern? Well, visualize a leaf or woodland design with the colors being various shades of grey and solid black. Now you can understand why we say its a striking alternative to the uniforms you've seen.

Our Urban Camo BDU's are durable, easy care 50% cotton/50% polyester fabric and are manufactured in the USA to military specifications. So, the pants have a reinforced seat and knees, the jacket has reinforced elbows. Also featured are: pull tab waist, drawstring cuffs, covered buttons and the attention to every small detail which you've come to expect. **Brand New. Sizes: XS, S, M, L, XL.**

Regular Lengths - Specify: Jacket or Pants \$34.00/each; \$65.00/set
Long Lengths available in Pants only S, M, L Add \$3.00

Woodland Camouflage Pattern BDU's - Lightweight, Hot Zone Wear - 100% cotton, Ripstop

One of the loudest complaints voiced by our troops during and after the US incursion into Grenada was that the fatigues they were wearing were too heavy and warm. No wonder - the GI Woodland BDU's are half cotton/half nylon and constructed to be for general use year-round. So, in a warm, humid climate they could seem almost oppressive especially to troops pursuing an activity as strenuous as fighting a war.

After Grenada the US military quickly designed lightweight BDU's for wear in Warm Climate Zones. Kaufman's has secured an over-run of fatigues under consideration for issuance to all troops. Our lightweight BDU's are made in the USA (of course) by a military contractor. They offer all the features of the Woodland BDU's, standard weight. That is, they are in the Woodland Camouflage Pattern and feature reinforced knees and seat, pull tab waist, drawstring cuffs, quality construction, covered buttons, etc. The lightweight fatigues however are 100% cotton, woven in a ripstop design. So they are lightweight, cool and comfortable, yet very durable.

Presently our Warm Zone Lightweight Woodland BDU's are available **only in regular lengths (no longs)**. However, in time long lengths may become available, so feel free to call our Customer Service Department on our toll-free line to learn about our current inventory. **Brand New. Specify: Jacket or Pants \$30.00/each; \$57.50/set**

Used Camouflage Jungle Fatigue Jackets -

We have a limited supply of used, leaf pattern camouflage fatigue jackets. These are the old style, used in Vietnam, and so are in the 100% cotton ripstop fabric.

All of the jackets we have on hand are size small. These used Camo Jungle Jackets are Grade II's which means each jacket has been repaired and some of the repairs are very noticeable. However, each jacket is completely serviceable and we have cleaned them after the repairs were made. Kaufman's guarantees your satisfaction so you can buy with confidence. **Sizes: Small only. Length:**

- Short \$9.75/each
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JOGGING SHORTS

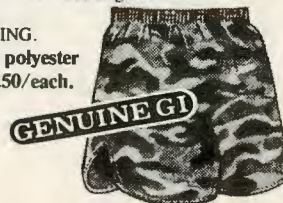
Ours are stylish shorts made in the USA that feature a trim fit and fashionable good looks. Perfect whether worn for a hard workout or as trend setting fashion.

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- Desert Camouflage Pattern
- Olive Drab (OD) Green
- Khaki (tan)



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GENUINE GI

This is a high intensity strobe beacon which penetrates rain and fog and is visible for distances up to 15 miles. Standard pilot survival gear, this light is about the size of a pack of cigarettes (1" x 2" x 4 1/2") yet it puts out a dazzling white flash (250,000 lumens) 50 times per minute for up to 9 hours. The unit is waterproof and shockproof. Sold complete with case and 1 battery \$39.50/each.

Replacement Batteries for Strobe Light.

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- Woodland Pattern camo, army's latest issue; 50% cotton/50% nylon Genuine GI \$12.25/each.
- Desert camouflage; just issued to the U.S. Rapid Deployment Forces. 50% cotton/50% nylon; Genuine GI \$12.25/each.
- Olive Drab (OD) Green; 100% cotton GI ripstop as used in early Vietnam. Genuine GI \$14.00/each.



The following jungle hats are our finest quality commercially made copies at \$7.00/each. Select:

- Tiger Stripe Camouflage Pattern
- Woodland Camouflage Pattern
- Olive Drab Green (OD)
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RUN BETWEEN THE RAIN-DROPS. A novel by Dale A. Dye. Avon Books, Dept. SOF, 1790 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10019. Copyright September 1985. 336 pp. \$3.50 U.S., \$4.50 Canada. Review by James L. Pate.

AS a topic for news, film and fiction, Vietnam and its last war have risen, fallen and risen again. A decade after its precipitous defeat to the communists brought a tyrannical "peace" to the ravaged nation, Vietnam as a topic for poetry, fictional and non-fictional prose, drama and films has reached floodstage. Indeed, it is much too soon and we still are much too close to be able to recognize any artistic highwater mark as such.

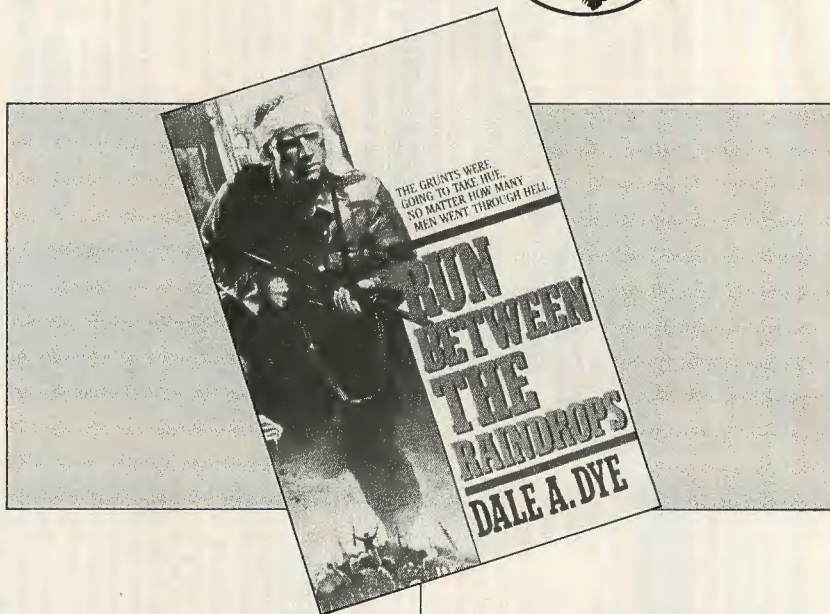
As popular fascination recedes and many works wash away with the falling tide of memory, only a few of these literary artifacts will remain on solid ground to outlive the generation that created the war and its art. The contemporary literature that survives its generation will do so because it uses the Vietnam War as a canvas on which to paint the agony and ecstasy of conflict experienced by every man who has ever fought for any cause in the setting of any war.

Run Between the Raindrops will live on as one man's epitaph to a generation because it captures so well the pathos, the very personal struggles and conflicts that characterized the lives of thousands of people who left The World to fight a war, and returned to find that world and themselves unalterably changed in ways they had never imagined. Dye, a career Marine and writer who spent his first year after retirement as executive editor of *Soldier of Fortune* before taking off for Hollywood, has succeeded well with his first book. **Run Between the Raindrops** will always live because its war was fought in the most personal terms. We all recognize the man because he is us.

The curiosity about the book for the professional soldiers and journalists who have known Dye over the years is that it is presented as fiction. It is actually thinly veiled fact. The book chronicles the experiences of a Marine Corps combat correspondent covering the Battle of Hue City. Sergeant Dale A. Dye was there, ostensibly doing just that. But like Dye, the book's protagonist — coincidentally named D.A. — was fighting inside himself a much bigger battle than the savage house-to-house bloodbath that raged around him for days. He learns a very difficult — almost fatal — lesson: One can't run between the raindrops and not get wet. If you face the experience, you are doomed to be changed by it.

Scheduled for R&R in Hong Kong,

IN REVIEW



D.A. hears about Big Trouble brewing up around Hue City and links up instead with another Marine photographer, an old buddy named Steve, which happens to be the name of Dye's closest friend in Vietnam. As the battle progresses, D.A. becomes increasingly disturbed by Steve's growing tendency to pick up a gun to shoot gooks rather than pick up his camera to shoot pictures. D.A.'s own internal fight is to admit to himself that what he sees in Steve bothers him most because it is a perfect reflection of himself. It is a struggle of keeping some mental distance between the insanity of the moment and making a personal commitment to do what has to be done.

Dye's writing style is short, clipped and punchy, much like the speaking style of the grunt. It is primarily stream-of-consciousness, and in some places the reader has difficulty discerning the difference between what D.A. is thinking and what he is actually saying. One gets the impression he often thinks out loud. Dye's writing in this first book — like all wars and the men who fight them — is markedly profane, but it is a genuine profanity that in no way seems out of context. Dye does a good job in maintaining a high level of tension, one that leaves the reader alternately feeling relieved and anxious.

The setting — the ancient walled capitol of Hue with its heavily fortified Citadel — is interesting in the context of the Vietnam War. In a war in which our enemy typically hit fast and hard and melted away into the jungle, Hue City represented a very fixed target. And in a war characterized by uncon-

ventional jungle guerrilla fighting, Hue was an inch-by-bloody-inch battle of attrition, conventional urban warfare at its worst.

D.A. — and Dye — faced up to some grim realities at the Battle for Hue: "Is there a difference between seeing a guy you don't know blown apart . . . or shredded to death by a mine and finding some dude you know executed? Where's the Old Buddy Syndrome? This isn't how you're supposed to feel. Where's the subtly macho tear that's supposed to trickle down your cheek? Why aren't you out there vowing revenge on the heathen enemy? Personal perimeter too tight for that. Look behind all that bullshit, man. Fact is, you're fairly fucking elated that it wasn't you lying out there."

You don't have to be a military veteran, a scholar or a war correspondent to know that every war is the same for the people who have to fight it. Xenophon and Tolstoy and Mailer and Dye are describing the same struggle. Xenophon wrote about the politics of war, Tolstoy portrayed its epic romance and tragedy, Mailer defines modern warfare and politics on a personal level and Dye tells us how it tastes, how it smells, describes in detail the awful sights and sounds. His story takes us on an emotional rollercoaster, like climbing into some souped-up Amtrak that is his brain. To read **Run Between the Raindrops** is to see the world through the author's eyes, to hump the boonies of his brain for a stunningly personal trip into the Battle of Hue City. ✕

Explore the Twisted World of the NAZIS.



Master of hate, Joseph Goebbels was the intellectual in the Nazi hierarchy.



Eva Braun secretly collected candid photographs of her days with Hitler.

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WANTED

Burton Brings 'Em Back Alive

Text by Nate Taylor
Photos by David Bjorkman



YOU won't find them wearing a hip-slung six-gun or tearing "Wanted — Dead or Alive" posters off the wall outside the sheriff's office, but there are some successful bounty hunters working in America today. They are intentionally hard to find. While they work completely within the law — most of the time — it doesn't help their business to become overly well-known.

That's why I jumped at the chance to accompany professional bounty hunter Bob Burton on a case in Los Angeles. It's not every day you get to watch the stalking and

Many suspects become submissive when they learn they are under arrest but others do not want their freedom taken away.

capture of the world's most dangerous and elusive prey — a wanted man.

We were snorting scotch in a semisleazy L.A. bar when one of Burton's regular snitches unexpectedly called with a tip on the location of a fugitive Bob had been tracking for some time. The guy was a genuine prince. He had jumped bail on a child-molestation charge and gone under-

ground. Burton stood to make \$2,500 if he could nab the guy. It could get hairy. Back in the hands of the law, this geek was bound to do significant time.

In fact, Burton admitted he was feeling bad vibes for a number of reasons. "We've been drinking — which is against my policy when I'm working — and we're going down into the jungle on a Friday night. Hell, the police only go in there in unmarked cars with two black-and-whites waiting on the outside." But \$2,500 for a couple of hours' work is hard to pass up, even if you have to

hang your ass on the line in one of L.A.'s toughest ghettos to collect it.

Burton made a couple of stops to pick up his bounty-hunting tools: a bagful of assorted equipment and a certified copy of the bail agreement between the bondsman and the culprit. That piece of paper is the bounty hunter's warrant for making a citizen's arrest. With me riding shotgun in his nondescript car, Burton decided to dispense with calling in his usual partner. He seemed to think my size and military background would be sufficient if we got into trouble. I wasn't so sure.

L.A. glitter faded to squalor as we entered the seamy side of town. Punks of every possible persuasion war-danced in the streets. Life down here is cheaper than a dime-bag of smack. I could sense Burton's tension. He is a combat veteran Force Recon Marine with enough savvy to understand these asphalt jungles are just as dangerous as the ones he survived in Southeast Asia.

Our destination was a bar on the ground floor of a cheap hotel. When we had the place in sight, Burton swung his car into a littered curb about 100 yards from the entrance. A couple of kids were squabbling over a ball as we parked. They telegraphed "outsiders in the area" by falling silent and gawking at us. Alerted by the quiet, a woman yelled for them to come inside and flicked off her porchlight. It pays to be paranoid in these mean streets.

We sat in the darkened car as Burton reached in his kit-bag for a pair of binoculars. He would scan the area and watch for his man to make a move. It would be stupid for a bounty hunter to walk inside the bar and start asking questions. His quarry would be out the back and gone before Burton's eyes could adjust to the dim interior. We were now on what legitimate cops would call a stake-out. Don't let TV mislead you. It is not glamorous.

Burton says there's not much glamor at all in his chosen profession. He estimates a bountyman spends 90 percent of his time in the boring work of tracing a fugitive, eight percent cooling his heels until just the right moment for the arrest, and only two percent feeling the adrenaline rush of contact. That seemed to match my opinion of the time most soldiers spend in combat.

"Our man's supposedly subbing as a dishwasher tonight." Burton glanced at his watch. "He should be out in 10 minutes. We'll just sit tight and hope he doesn't disappear out a back door."

On schedule a swarthy, skinny dude ambled out the door of the bar and up the sidewalk toward us. Burton didn't need to check the description. "There he is! I can almost feel that cold cash in my fingers."

While Burton studied the man's moves trying to determine when to spring the trap, his man ducked into a waiting car. The snatch would have to wait. Burton swung into traffic concentrating on the tail lights of the car that was apparently carrying the fugitive home. We trailed the vehicle into a



The supreme bounty hunter, Ralph "Papa" Thorson with Smith & Wesson Model .38 Bodyguard and High Standard 12-gauge riot gun.

run-down housing project. It was full of night people milling around and looking mean. Burton shook his head and continued to cruise. "We can't stop here. We'd be eaten alive."

Toward the end of a cratered street, the car we were tailing swung alongside a white stucco house just beyond the projects. The driver and our man disappeared inside carrying a 12-pack. No lights went on but we spotted their location by the eerie blue glow of the TV screen. That probably meant we were facing two-on-two, Burton thought, but we spent the better part of an hour making sure no reinforcements arrived to join the party.

Burton heaved a sigh and made a decision. "We'd better go to it before conditions change. I don't want them to get too loaded. All we need is a belligerent drunk." He grabbed a flashlight and handcuffs. I didn't ask about the suspicious bulge at his waistband. If he wasn't armed in a situation like this, he had more guts than grey matter.

We approached the house, staying in the shadows next to the walls. The crunching sounds our feet made on the gravel driveway sounded like the clank of tank tracks to me. Burton paid little attention. Whatever our targets were watching was apparently a good show. At the screen door we spotted two men sitting on a couch. The fugitive was hypnotized by the TV. His buddy was nodding at his side. No one else was in sight.

Burton banged the door open and rushed in, flicking the high-intensity beam of his flashlight into the fugitive's eyes. The guy lurched off the couch and made a grab for Burton. It was totally ineffective. He had one hand in front of his eyes to shade them from the intense beam of the flashlight and

Burton lightly side-stepped out of the way.

"You're under arrest." Burton made a move that the LAPD would have loved and grabbed the guy by his outstretched hand. He spun him around then pinned him against a wall. To make sure he stayed put, Burton bent the captive's arm painfully up into the area of the shoulder blade. If the fugitive didn't realize he was in the bag at first, he certainly did now. He hung his head and relaxed against the pressure Burton was applying. The snap of the cuffs signaled end-of-message. Our man was in custody. The racket had roused the culprit's buddy but he took one look at what was happening and backed off quickly. The look in his eyes told me he thought we were the heat.

"Cover me while I check him." Burton drew my attention from the second man and handed over his flashlight. I kept one eye on the other guy and hoped he wouldn't figure out my only weapon was the dazzling light. Burton patted his man down like a police-trained pro and turned up nothing more than a pipe and a plastic bag full of dope. He chuckled and tossed the paraphernalia on the couch.

"You mind if we leave this for your buddy? I think you're in enough trouble. Now we're going to take a little ride." He ordered me to get the car and I rushed out of the house.

Cranking the engine I watched while Burton and the handcuffed man backed outside. He pushed his captive into the back seat on the passenger side, strapping him in place with a seat-belt and leaving his hands cuffed at the small of his back. Burton slapped restraints on the guy's feet and crawled in beside him. He reached in his pocket for the papers he'd brought and snapped on a light to show them to his captive. The guy couldn't believe he'd been bagged by someone who was not a cop.

"You mean you're just a bounty hunter?" They were the last words our child-molester spoke before Burton marched him into an L.A. precinct house for booking.

Bounty hunting as an American occupation has changed little since the 1800s when the wide-open spaces west of the Mississippi offered sanctuary to shootists, cattle rustlers and bank robbers. In those days a fugitive could get lost for a long, long time in the rough, dusty frontier towns before a persistent bounty hunter caught wind of him. When he was finally cornered, the badman either surrendered at gunpoint or returned to custody bleeding into the ground and slung over his saddle.

These days the professional bountyman must bring his quarry back to custody alive. He may not kill the man or woman or rough them up in any way if he expects to be paid for his effort and avoid being charged with a crime himself. It's a frustrating profession and not many stay with it unless they happen to be hard-nosed businessmen. The modern man-trapper rides the range in an air-conditioned automobile and his trusty sidearm is usually a telephone. Still, there is always the showdown to make it all interesting.

A professional bountyman is legally an agent of the bail bondsman who posted release money for a defendant. If that defendant hits the ground at a dead run as soon as he's sprung instead of appearing at his hearing, the bail is forfeited. That makes bail bondsmen very unhappy and they cheer when they can get a good bounty hunter on the trail.

It varies according to state law, but the bondsman generally has between 10 days and one year to find the man or lose his money to the court. Most of them know at least one reliable bounty hunter who will prevent that by tracking down and arresting the bail-jumper for a commission. That means the hunter generally gets 20 percent of the bail from the bondsman if he can deliver the fugitive before the deadline set by law.

Unlike policemen without iron-clad warrants, the bounty hunter *can* enter a bail-jumper's home to arrest him. And there is no requirement to read Miranda Rights when taking the man into custody. It's all spelled out in a Supreme Court ruling (*Taintor vs. Taylor*, 1982) that states the bondsman or his agent may "pursue him (the wanted person) to another state; may arrest him on the Sabbath; and, if necessary, may break and enter his house for that purpose . . . it is likened to the rearrest by the sheriff of an escaping prisoner."

Despite the high-court ruling, it's not simply an open season for anyone who thinks he's bad enough to bag a wanted man. The bounty hunter *must be authorized by the bondsman*. If he fails to obtain that authorization and makes an arrest, he could be found guilty of kidnapping.

"When a guy jumps, the bondsman first hopes the police will stop him on a routine traffic matter, run his name through the big computer in the sky and find out that he's a fugitive," Burton says. "But when that doesn't happen, he begins to sweat. That's when he calls a bounty hunter."

The first step is finding the fugitive. Most bounty hunters prefer to let their fingers do the walking before they drive out to check the old neighborhood. With a few telephone calls and the right technical information, a bounty hunter can make a national sweep of information — both public and private — and net dozens of facts about a fugitive. The work is mostly mental as the bounty hunter tracks the jumper through residences and jobs on his zig-zag path to elude detection.

Contacts — both those who know the fugitive and professional informers — are the lifeline of the bounty hunter. Snitches become motor-mouths when they smell money. Getting family and friends to provide information requires a more imaginative approach.

"A bounty hunter is a chameleon, posing as various people to get info," Burton says. "He has to jive with the low-lifers when he's chasing a drug dealer and drink with the country club set at other times. I've posed as a sympathetic minister, the jumper's brother and the jumper himself to get an



The control center in Thorson's home is the bar where people congregate to talk and exchange information.

address, a phone number, any kind of lead.

"Wives and girlfriends talk when they feel that the no-good bastard has left them holding the bag. Sometimes they've put up their house or paycheck as security for the bail. Mothers have told me where to find their sons because they 'don't want to see the poor boy run for the rest of his life.' Neighbors talk out of spite. The key is to keep people talking until you find what buttons to push."

Later, when he's located the target, the bounty hunter will generally hire an imposing partner for \$150 or so per day to help with the pickup. Being a lone wolf is not smart. Although bounty hunting seems like an adult version of "cops and robbers" the stakes are for keeps. Done correctly, the arrest generally goes off without violent hitches. The maximum extent of violence in most arrests is a takedown or restraining hold that allows the partner to clap on the cuffs.

That doesn't mean gunplay is unheard of in the arrests made by bounty hunters. Taken by surprise, fugitives often defend themselves from what they think is a mugging. The bountyman needs physical prowess, appropriate tools and one or two partners who work well with him. It also helps if all involved can handle their fists and other weapons.

Ralph "Papa" Thorson, the subject of the Steve McQueen movie *The Hunter*, has more than 10,000 arrests to his credit —

Burton and Thorson close in on a suspect with extensive door-to-door work.

most of them nonviolent. His reputation is such that fugitives brag about being picked up by Thorson. Yet Thorson is the first to admit the unpredictability of a man on the run makes every arrest potentially deadly.

"When you go out to get someone, you're confronting the two most precious things he has — his life and his liberty. You had damn-well better be prepared for resistance," Thorson says. "If you pull a gun, it had better come out smoking."

Bounty hunters as a group tend to play down the dangerous aspect of their occupation. Too much talk of weaponry attracts the nuts with a chip on their shoulder and overkill in their arsenal, they say. The best way to stay alive is to be conservative and wary.

"I play it safe because I'm a stone coward," says Thorson. "That's how I've survived."

Despite such reservations, most professional bounty hunters rely on a fairly standard arsenal in their work: automatic shotguns, the Prowler Fouler impact gun, a Colt .45 Government Model pistol like Thorson's, a S&W Model 38 Bodyguard and a back-up boot-gun like the Brechia .22 LR. The impact gun is a particularly useful tool if the bounty hunter is allowed to employ it.

The weapon is illegal in some states. It propels a small bag of buckshot at a high rate of speed. The impact is like a solid punch and will knock a man backward when he's hit in the chest. Usually the only damage is a minor bruise and a few seconds of confusion during which he can be handcuffed. The drawback is that the gun fires only once. People who employ it can't afford to miss.

The .45 Colt pistol — like Thorson's which has been modified with an ambidextrous safety and all stainless-steel working parts — is a particular bounty hunter favorite. Thorson spurns the use of anything smaller since he discharged five shots from a .38 into a berserk assailant only to have the man keep charging.

"There are only two guns when you go people-hunting: the .45 and the shotgun. I've seen too many people shot with a .38 or 9mm who keep on going. I've never seen

anyone hit with a .45 who walked away," he says.

But in the hand of an unstable bounty hunter, a gun is a liability for everyone concerned. Bondsmen, who are liable for the actions of their agents, shun them. Other bounty hunters want nothing to do with off-the-wall manhunters.

"Weapons and aggressive behavior are what these people offer. What they need is sanity and maturity," scoffs Thorson. "Weapons are for self-defense in this business. And the courts' mentality is that you can't shoot in self-defense until the other guy shoots you first — twice."

In one of Burton's cases, a quick mind rather than a smoking pistol saved the day in a potentially violent confrontation. A Long Beach snitch had informed on a fugitive Burton was seeking. Although he was not considered dangerous, the man had a history of bizarre behavior. When he arrived at the motel where the man was supposed to be staying, Burton spotted his man's car, a beautiful Bentley convertible.

"I knocked at the guy's room and here came two rounds through the door," Burton recalls. "We weren't armed, so I motioned my partner to go out and get the shotgun. When he didn't respond to anything I told him after about 30 minutes, I got an idea.

"I'm going downstairs and pump 12 rounds into your Bentley, Roberto," I threatened. There was a long silence. "You wouldn't," he wailed.

"It'll look like a Swiss Bentley when I get through," I promised him.

"I'll triple the price of your reward," he offered.

"That sounded good, but I couldn't stop there. I want the fame, not the money, Roberto," I answered.

"Finally, after I promised him that I'd deliver him to the L.A. Police in his Bentley and then keep it until he could make arrangements for it, Roberto agreed to go. He spent five years in the slammer and is now a very influential leader of an ethnic group."

Like most independent contractors, bounty hunters grab what they can during the fat times and use the proceeds from the previous case to finance the next. With an estimated 300,000 bail-jumpers in New York City alone, the occupation appears to be a goldmine. An average take grosses about \$2,500, although the amount varies greatly. And the net profit may be far less. Travel, bribes and salaries eat into profits. Burton knows one hunter who made \$78,000 on a single arrest. Beginning bounty hunters may work for as little as \$400 just to get their feet wet.

Commissions begin at 10 percent and may go up to 40 percent for a hazardous arrest or one that requires travel — possibly to Mexico. "Negotiation is in order," Burton suggests. "Sometimes the irate person who put up the security for the bail will pay up to 100 percent just to put the jumper

GETTING IN

That old Catch-22 about not being able to get work until you've had experience and not being able to get experience until you've found work applies to bounty hunting in America. Police and court records indicate there may be as many as six million bail-jumpers at large in the United States, but that doesn't make convincing a bail-bondsman to let you work for him an easy proposition.

Very few will take a chance and appoint someone they don't know personally or by reputation. The legal liability for wrongful arrest or use of excessive force is simply too great.

"The bondsman is looking for a steady, mature individual who will do the job simply and without fanfare. He's not looking for a nut with an arsenal or an ego with a black belt," Burton advises in his book *Bounty Hunter*. "Gun-handling and martial-arts training are great, but they should be complemented by good skip-tracing abilities and an active imagination."

The would-be bounty hunter who refuses to be discouraged by the odds may find a first job as an apprentice to an established professional working for expense money only. If he's very lucky and inspires confidence, he may find a bondsman who will entrust him with a small, not-too-risky case. Many bondsmen look for those with a knowledge of ethnic areas of a city or an ability to speak the language of an ethnic group.

That will require tools. A car is a must, preferably one that is large enough to haul the fugitive to the precinct station without cramping him in alongside you. The rear passenger-side seat should be equipped with a seat belt for buckling up the fugitive and, if possible, leg restraints.

Handcuffs are essential, along with a flashlight, a reliable handgun, a shotgun, a BB gun for plinking yard lights, and perhaps an impact gun like the Prowler Foulner.

The bounty hunter should have a good working knowledge of the Penal Code of the states he will be working in and a copy of the bail agreement which gives him the authorization to pick up the fugitive.

"This paper must be presented when the fugitive is turned in to the precinct station," Burton says. "Without authorization to pick up the fugitive the bounty hunter is considered a kidnapper."

Skip-tracing is a major bounty hunting activity. Having experience with sources of information — both public and private — and the willingness to approach contacts is essential. A vivid imagination may be an unlikely requirement for the bounty hunter, but it sure helps in being able to dream up schemes



Tools of the bounty hunter's trade. Wanted posters, S&W Model .38 Bodyguard back-up gun, Brechia .22-LR boot gun, multicelled flashlight and handcuffs.

for weeding information from hostile sources. Burton has gained information on the pretext that he is peddling religion door-to-door. He has also posed as the landlord or a long-lost relative of fugitives he is seeking. He has even played the role of *the fugitive* checking on an unpaid bill to glean info from credit-card companies and utilities. Burton has written to military sources for the fugitive's records. The bounty hunter is limited in his quest for leads only by a lack of ingenuity.

"A bounty hunter needs the intellect of F. Lee Bailey, the personality of Woody Allen, and the body of Mr. T," Burton says. The prerequisites are listed in order of importance.

The ideal pickup occurs when the fugitive is alone and without a weapon. If he's on a lucky streak, the bounty hunter will find his subject meek and submissive when he informs the man he's under arrest and slaps on the cuffs. That happens once in a while, but it's certainly not to be presumed. The objective must always be to handcuff him with his wrists behind his back as soon as possible.

"The fugitive should be thoroughly checked for weapons," Burton says. "I was very embarrassed when I turned in someone I thought was clean and the receiving officer found a boot gun."

With the average commission being about 20 percent of the bail, the bounty hunter stands to make a substantial amount if he is well-known as a successful manhunter. However, like every businessman, he has his overhead: transportation, insurance, equipment, bribes and helpers. Each job must help finance the next.

"And he should be sure he has a good health-and-life insurance plan," Burton adds. "In this business, that's a must."

Continued on page 77

KAISER'S GRAVEYARD

Dive on Scapa Flow

by Bob Michelson



FASCINATED by the panorama of the Orkney Islands, it was hard for me to keep an eye on the images building up on our radar screen. I stood on the deck of the *Crombie* as her master guided the dive-boat through the thick fog of Stromness Harbor and into the rolling swells of Scapa Flow.

My crew of divers and another bunch in a second boat out there in the pea soup were bound to take an underwater look at the German High Seas Fleet which rested in eternal silence under the cold waters of Scapa Flow. This was my second dive on the great graveyard of the World War I German Navy and I recognized the fascination with this unusual chapter in military history that my fellow divers were feeling. As we

SMS Derfflinger, a German battlecruiser, sinking 21 June 1919. Metal Industries Ltd. refloated her in 1939, and she was scrapped in 1945.

searched for wreck echoes and our companion boat in the fog that shrouds the northern coast of Scotland, I was glad to be in the company of veteran divers. This would not be an easy or comfortable two weeks of diving. We would be doing at least two and sometimes three dives per day regardless of the weather. And the weather around Scapa Flow is almost always awful.

We made contact with the other dive-boat — the *Sisters II* — and used our radar and echo-sounder to

guide her into position over a sunken German warship. We were 20 minutes from the first dive and everyone scrambled to do double-checks on equipment. Only the youngest and hardest in our party were going to brave the cold water of Scapa Flow in wet-suits. Most of us were slipping into dry-suits and wondering about the shock we could expect from water that rarely rises above a temperature of 14 degrees C even at the height of summer.

Most of the divers on the international team I was leading were used to such things from frequent activity in the North Sea and the Baltic. It was more pleasant to contemplate the history of the great naval armada that lay beneath the waves in


EXPATRIATE DIVER

Bob Michelson, 41, grew up along the coastline in Massachusetts and Connecticut, where he was always fascinated by the sea and marine life. After high school he completed studies in gourmet cooking and hotel/restaurant management at the Culinary Institute of America. Never one to get in a rut, Bob then decided to enlist in the U.S. Army. He served most of his four-year hitch as a communications specialist for the Army Security Agency in Frankfurt, West Germany. With the exception of 15 months after his 1967 discharge, the former sergeant has lived since then in West Germany. Now a computer programmer for a publishing firm, Bob took up SCUBA diving in 1970. He and his



The author, Bob Michelson, while diving the Scapa Flow.

wife, Elke, have dived the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Baltic and the Red seas. Their photographs have appeared in various German, British and U.S. diving magazines. *SOP* welcomes Bob aboard.



Scapa Flow, once the homeport of Great Britain's mighty North Atlantic Grand Fleet.

At the turn of the century, Germany's industrial and military might increased, giving her the incentive to join in the European scramble for colonial possessions around the world. Determined to break Britain's control of European and African waters in 1898 and again in 1900, Germany passed naval construction laws. The German naval bill of 1900 called for Germany to "have a battle fleet so strong that even the adversary possessing the greatest sea power will attack it only with grave risk to herself."

So began the first arms race of the 20th century which focused on the seapower of Great Britain and

Germany. By the outbreak of WWI, Britain still had the upper hand over Germany — more tonnage, more men and more ships. But the Kaiser's sailors had the edge in firepower. The few sea engagements fought between German and British ships proved that conclusively. But firepower was not enough and the British managed to hold the German fleet at bay by bottling it up in its homeports under heavy blockade.

As the war drew to an end, the morale of German sailors was at an all-time low. The gloom and frustration was intensified by the news that Germany's allies were collapsing like bowling pins forcing the government to ask for an armistice on 4 October 1918. As the Allied powers drew up plans

Diver looking over the bow section of the F-2 with its 105mm deck gun where it lies on its port side.

for the armistice, they agreed that the potentially powerful German fleet should be interned in a neutral harbor until the final peace treaty was signed. That would involve neutralizing a force of 10 battleships, six battle cruisers, eight light cruisers, 50 destroyers and all the U-boats in the German Navy.

It was a tall order that was refused by most neutral countries of Europe. The combined staff of the Allied admiralties decided to hold the deadly U-boat fleet in a series of English ports while the surface vessels would be interned in Scapa Flow under the watchful eyes of the British Fleet command.

Haphazardly, but with remarkable speed, the ships were made ready for their voyage into internment from their home ports of Wilhelmshaven and Kiel. Gun parts, gunnery control equipment, range-finding apparatus, ammunition and small arms were removed from the ships and piled on the docks. The advanced equipment which had helped the Germans attain unsurpassed standards in naval gunnery was flung carelessly onto the concrete docks or overboard into the harbor. Stores and supplies for the internment crews were loaded just as the last stages of disarmament — the removal of the breech-blocks and wireless equipment — was completed. The German surface fleet was about to become an ignoble prisoner of war.

With only minimum crews, the ships got underway on 19 November 1918 — destination: the Firth of Forth, off the coast of Edinburgh, Scotland. At 0830 on 21 November, the fog along the coast lifted and the German fleet



Author's wife prepares to enter the wreck of the German destroyer V-83.

steamed into the Firth of Forth between waiting lines of Allied vessels. The official surrender was completed when the British teams had inspected each German ship and confirmed that the disarmament conditions had been fulfilled. About an hour before noon, Admiral Beatty signaled the enemy ships, all of which were flying the German battleflag at their mains, "The German flag will be hauled down at sunset today and will not be hoisted again without permission. The German Fleet will proceed to internment in Scapa Flow."

An announcement from our skipper that we were over the wreck of the German ship *Brummer*, a 4,500-ton mine-laying cruiser brought me back to the present. A few factors determine how wreck-diving is conducted in

Scapa Flow. The body of water is, for all practical purposes, nearly landlocked. There are no currents in the flow so dive-boats generally do not anchor on the wrecks. They lower a marker buoy fastened to 80 meters of line with a piece of scrap-iron fastened to the other end. A slip-knot holding the scrap-iron allows the recovery of the line if it becomes snagged in the wreck. During the dive, the boats circle the site and stand by to pick-up divers when they surface. With no currents to worry about, divers simply ascend to the surface after the allotted



bottom-time and bob around on the surface until the boat spots them and makes the recovery.

On the first pass over the buoy, the first two divers — Wolfgang and Michael — took a long stride

Marine life on a cannon barrel grows even in Scotland's cold waters.

out through the opening in the gunwale, splashing into the gray water of Scapa Flow. With a practiced heave on their 16mm movie camera in its underwater housing and two 500-watt lamps attached to a stabilizing wing, they were ready to descend. I followed two other divers into the cold water. As we got our bearings, I raised my fist with the thumb pointing down — we let the air out of our dry-suits and sank beneath the surface.

It was a long, slow descent and the blackness of the water prompted me to think again about the strange situation which had brought the German Fleet to the bottom of Scapa Flow.

The warships whose guns had roared defiance at the Battle of Jutland in 1916 stood disarmed and rusting in Scapa Flow at the end of World War I. The Royal Navy's battle cruiser force was stationed in this natural harbor of some 80 square miles surrounded by islands on all sides. They stood guard on the defeated German sailors manning emasculated ships. It was not pleasant duty, either for the British tars or the German sailors who grew restless as the internment process dragged on. Discipline among the German sailors deteriorated as days turned into weary months while politicians on both sides worked on what would become the Treaty of Versailles. The cold, raw, wet winter of the North Atlantic

depressed the German crews who were not allowed ashore for any reason.

Rebellious German sailors hoisted a red flag aboard one of the interned warships on 31 May 1919 and the German commander, Admiral Ludwig von Reuter, convinced the British to reduce the internment crews by an additional 40 percent to avoid further incidents. He had something other than simply keeping the peace on his mind.

Realizing he was under less threat from the reduced force of the British 1st Battle Squadron which had been tasked with guarding the interned German Fleet by May 1919 and convinced that his ships would be seized by the Allies once the armistice

Diver displays "Dead-Eye," a cherished souvenir found on older ships.



period ended, Admiral von Reuter planned a desperate gamble to keep the vessels from enemy hands. He set into motion a plan which he had developed when the smaller 1st Battle Squadron had taken over the guarding responsibilities in May 1919. On 17 June — five days before the armistice expired at noon on the 21st — the German admiral ordered preparations on all ships for a scuttling which would take place two hours before the deadline.

Von Reuter could not bear the thought of the disgrace that the German Navy would suffer if the British were allowed to take over his fleet without any resistance. Since he was allowed to communicate with the vessels under his command, there were few difficulties with coordinating the operation.

On the morning of 20 June the British commanding officer, Admiral Freemantle, learned that the Allied council had postponed the deadline for the armistice for two days until the 23rd. He promptly ordered his 1st Battle Squadron to sea on the morning of 21 June for tactical exercises. The German fleet was left practically unguarded except for a few small boats with parties of lightly armed sailors aboard. It was a fortunate occurrence for von Reuter who was never informed about the two-day postponement. In the absence of contrary orders from Germany, he ordered the scuttling of his fleet to commence at 1120.

At that hour, sea-cocks and watertight doors were opened or smashed with hammers to prevent

Exploring a hatchway leading into one of the German ships scuttled off northern Scotland.



These twin 37mm anti-aircraft guns no longer pose threat as diver circles wreck.

them from being re-closed. Doors, hatches and portholes were left open to hasten sinking while small boats were put over the side to evacuate the German crews. By noon, the *Friedrich der Grosse* and many of the other big ships were beginning to list and all the German warships had reflowed the Imperial ensign. That event caused the British port commander to signal Admiral Freemantle at sea. At 1220 the message "German battleship sinking" was flashed to Freemantle's flagship in the Pentland Firth some eight miles away.

The fleet exercise was swiftly canceled, but the ships of the 1st Battle Squadron — arriving back at Scapa Flow around 1430 — were too late to do anything but watch the German Fleet sink. In the towns and villages scattered around the flow the people of the Orkneys watched in awe as one ship after another of the Kaiser's mighty fleet settled in the water, turned keel-up, drifted toward shore, grounded or disappeared forever beneath the waters of Scapa Flow.

It is difficult to see how the British could have prevented the scuttling once the seacocks were opened. The few small British vessels and launches already in Scapa Flow were helpless, although they did fire at the German Fleet in an effort to compel the evacuating crews to go back and save the listing warships. The captain of the battleship *Markgraf* and nine others were killed in the shooting, which only added to the confusion.

All five battle cruisers went down, as did 10 of the 11 battleships. Only the newly completed *Baden* failed to sink and beached in shallow water. Half of the eight light cruisers sank, while the other half were beached. Of the 50 destroyers, four were partly flooded, 14 were beached, and the remaining 32 sank. Von Reuter's scuttling operation had been successful. It was all over by 1700 and 400,000 tons of metal and machinery worth 100 million pounds sterling had been sent to the bottom of Scapa Flow.

In a spectacular salvage operation that lasted from 1924 until 1939, all but three battleships, four light cruisers and three destroyers were retrieved for scrap. The remaining 10 ships and various other wrecks in the flow were going to keep divers like us busy for a long time.

With visibility underwater



U47 ATTACKS THE ROYAL OAK

averaging 10 to 12 meters when the sun shines, we were almost on the first wreck before it came into view. We noted a dark shadow which seemed to loom upward from the green wall of the sea water. As we continued to descend, more and more lines began to take on recognizable shapes. My heartbeat peaked as I felt my swim-fins touch the wreck.

The *Brummer* lay on her starboard side and our line anchor had landed on the upper port side about three meters back from the bow. I recognized a cleat on the edge of the deck with mooring cables still neatly wound around it and the anchor spill in the bow. The anchor chain, running out through the spill, was hanging over the edge of the wreck and disappeared in the emptiness below.

The three of us gathered together to check our gear once again, and after photographers made sure our cameras were functioning, we finned over to the edge and dropped down over the side. With the deck of the *Brummer* rising above us like a wall on our right side, we started to make our way along the wreck toward the stern.

I was immediately overwhelmed by the size of the wreck, forgetting everything from the year before. The *Brummer* is only 490 feet long and 50 feet wide so orientation

wasn't difficult. My buddies were in for a surprise later on when we reached the battleships lying keel-up in 160 feet of water. They are more than 600 feet long, 105 feet wide and some six times larger than the cruisers. These behemoths are as big as a small city and you have to explore them a block at a time.

I was surprised to find the wrecks in such good condition. Since only the flood valves were opened, the ships suffered little damage. The wrecks are wreathed with the typical growth of North Atlantic waters, mainly anemone and dead-man's hands. They are free of any kelp growth at this depth.

The three of us were spaced out one above the other as we moved along the deck. Ahead loomed a hatchway leading into the blackness of the ship's interior. Although we had agreed not to enter the wrecks, I couldn't resist the temptation. I swam into the hatchway and followed the ladder into the lower decks area, knowing that as long as I kept one hand on the ladder I'd have no problem finding my way back to the main deck.

The ladder ended abruptly two decks later and as I scanned the immediate area with the spotting

Continued on page 86

P\$Y-OPS

Buying Out the Bad Guys

by Robert K. Brown

Last February I offered \$100,000 to the first Nicaraguan aircrew that would deliver an Mi-24 (NATO designation *Hind*) to a non-communist country. Since that announcement, the private sector of the United States has rallied and chipped in an additional \$900,000. Not one cent of this collection is government money. Every dollar comes from private citizens and private business. American citizens are offering \$1 million to the first Nicaraguans who fly a *Hind* helicopter to freedom.

MONEY makes the wheels go around in the capitalist world, but there is no rule that prevents cold cash from getting results in communist countries, too.

Everybody likes money and the U.S. military has often been quick to sprinkle some around in an attempt to grease the wheels of progress. Perhaps the most high-profile plot involved paying rewards to communist pilots who defected with their aircraft. It often worked, and military intelligence found itself in the possession of some of the most sophisticated planes in the communist bloc's arms inventory.

The Korean War provided the first opportunity to try bald-faced bribery on the communists. U.S. military intelligence offered \$50,000 to any North Korean pilot who would turn his aircraft to American authorities in South Korea. The first pilot to defect would get a hefty bonus — an additional \$50,000.

Screaming over Seoul on 21 September

1953, the first North Korean defector took the chance and put his plane down in South Korea. He walked away to collect his \$100,000. The U.S. quickly granted the pilot political asylum and South Korean President Syngman Rhee offered him a job as an aircraft design researcher for the military.

While the U.S. military found it useful to get hold of communist MiGs, they had a more important motive for offering the rewards. The communists don't particularly like losing their aircraft, but they are even more concerned about the propaganda defeat that hits them every time a pilot defects. Washington reasoned that if a few pilots gave up the fight and turned over their planes, the communists might tighten up on military flights over South Korea. It worked. Enemy air strikes declined as the North Koreans scrambled to find a way to keep any more of their pilots from changing sides.

American money had bought results.

Korea wasn't the only theater of operations for Washington's reward scheme. In early 1953, Washington had also offered \$50,000 to any communist pilot who flew his MiG to a neutral country and turned it over to the authorities. Results came quickly.

On 6 March 1953, a Polish pilot flew his MiG-15 into Bonholm, Denmark and asked for political asylum. He got it and NATO got a chance to look at what was then the Soviets' hottest aircraft. Not surprisingly, the MiG proved to be less of a wonder weapon than had been predicted. Most U.S. planes were more advanced.

A second MiG flew NATO's way on 21 September of that same year when another Polish pilot nosed his plane into a Danish airport. This one proved to be more of a prize, though — it had more sophisticated electronics and weapons systems on board. Again, cold cash had proved more powerful than ideological dogma.

Communist pilots haven't always been lured from behind the Iron Curtain by the promise of wealth. Sometimes all it takes is good old-fashioned common sense. That's all it took to give the U.S. an unexpected opportunity to dissect the Soviet Union's most advanced fighter plane to date — the MiG-25 Foxbat. Streaking low under Japanese radar on 6 September 1976, Lieutenant Viktor Belenko touched down at Hakodate Air Base and turned his plane over to the military authorities. The U.S. immediately gave Belenko political asylum and began work on dismantling the Foxbat.

The Soviets' most advanced fighter proved to be more hype than technology. As before, it was not as sophisticated as its U.S. counterparts and taught American scientists little they didn't already know. But the Soviets were apparently concerned about the whole affair. The Kremlin vociferously demanded the return of their property, citing their "inviolable right" to protect military secrets. Think about that one for a few moments.

Our government has not tried to bribe communists into defecting recently. But some people in the private sector think that the system works and it's about time to use it again. *Soldier of Fortune Magazine* has backed talk with action on a number of occasions and the most recent offer hopes to land an Mi-24 *Hind* — Moscow's top-of-the-line attack helicopter — in friendly hands. Nicaragua has recently received 12 of these highly efficient ground support aircraft and that may bode ill for the contras. Without adequate anti-aircraft weapons, the *Hinds* could make life miserable for the freedom fighters. But if a Nicaraguan pilot turns one of these killing machines over, the communists might think twice about playing around on neighboring borders.

The money's right — \$1 million will go to the first chopper jock that can get his bird out of Nicaragua. So let the Big Wheels in Managua beware — SOF wants a *Hind*. ✎

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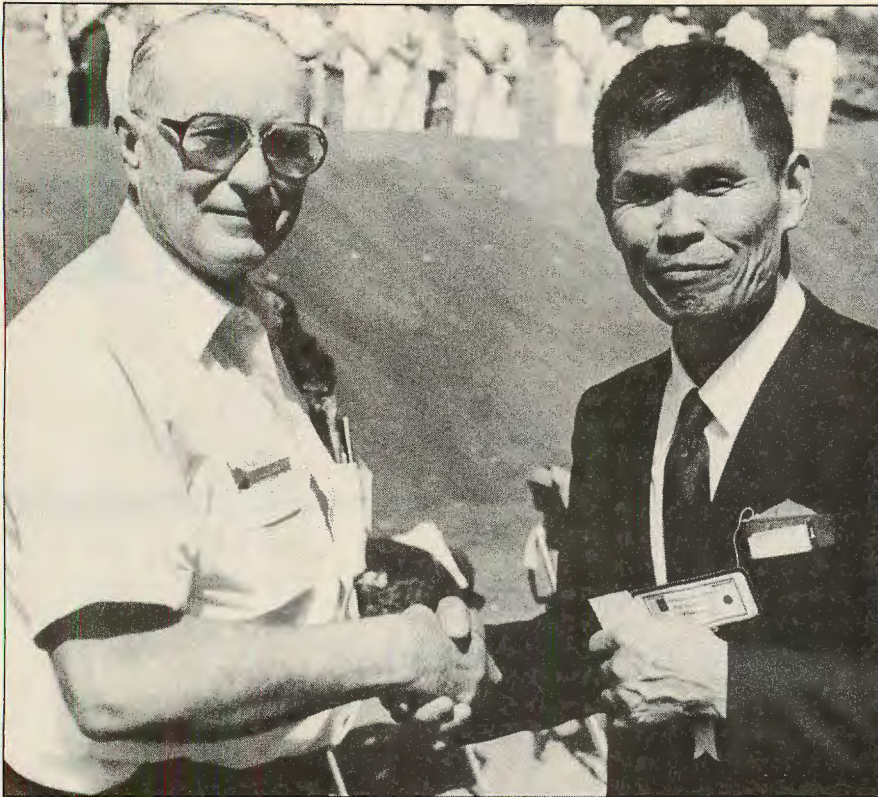
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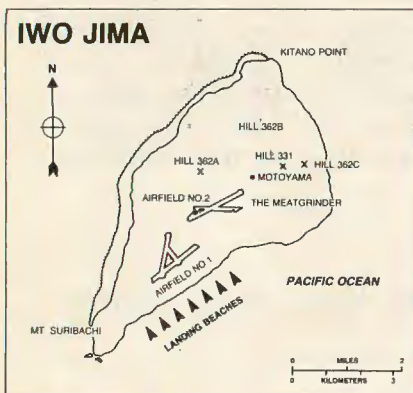
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IWO REUNION

Text & Photos by Sgt. Hugh Hawthorne, USMC



Finally, a friendly reunion between former enemies.



FORTY years ago the war with Japan ended, but not before life and limb were sacrificed in one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific Theater. On Iwo Jima, the price of victory was stiff as U.S. Marines hurled their might against the determined and fortified defense of the Japanese. During the 36-day battle, 6,000 Americans died and 17,000 were wounded. The outnumbered

Marine Division Associations and the Japanese Association of Iwo Jima would meet on the tiny volcanic island. And their reconciliation was long overdue.

As they approached the tiny runway, the WWII veterans were reminded of the island as they left it 40 years ago. If their memories served right, Iwo Jima had been stripped and pulverized by the pre-invasion air and naval bombardment. The island they remembered was covered with calf-deep, black volcanic ash and little else.

"We called the black sand 'coffee grounds,'" recalls veteran Bill McGrath. "Whenever you took a step up that beach you sunk into it and made very little progress."

But as the veterans stepped off the planes, they were impressed with a startling difference. Iwo Jima was green with thick, lush vegetation. The veterans were amazed as they stared out at the terrain, looking for familiar features . . . Hill 382, Turkey Knob, the Amphitheater, the Meat Grinder — objectives so strongly defended, and so fiercely taken.

The green Marine six-bys parked along the flightline looked familiar to the veterans as they climbed aboard for a dusty ride to the site of the opening ceremony. As the trucks bounced ahead the vegetation fell back to reveal the deserted invasion beach. Forty years ago this beach, swarming with landing craft, was divided into sections which bore the names Red, Yellow, Green and Blue. As always, the beach was black, but not a trace of craft or equipment, wrecked by the defender's artillery barrage, littered the terrain.

To the right they saw the sparkling blue Pacific. Memories flashed back to an ocean dotted with more than 900 American ships, all commanded by Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz. But now, not a ship was in sight and the waters looked almost too calm.

Mount Suribachi loomed ahead with the Stars and Stripes and the Rising Sun waving side by side on its summit. They had finally reached the ceremony site, and in the shadow of Mt. Suribachi, the Americans faced inland and the Japanese faced the ocean, as both groups had done years ago. Between them stood a veiled monument honoring veterans of the Battle of Iwo Jima as well as their fallen comrades.

The Star Spangled Banner commenced the ceremony, followed by the Japanese national anthem. Representatives of the veterans groups solemnly bade welcome to all gathered. Buddhist sutras were followed

STILL A MARINE

Staff Sergeant Hugh Hawthorne serves with the Marine Corps Public Affairs Office at Camp Smedley D. Butler on Okinawa, Japan. He is an award-winning photojournalist who has served in Marine Corps assignments across the United States. His wife, Chris, is also a Marine assigned to public affairs.

Japanese defenders fared worse. Fifteen thousand died and practically all the survivors were wounded. But on 19 February 1985, the anniversary of the first landing of U.S. forces on Iwo Jima, the rocky island would again earn its place in history as it had 40 years before. This time there would be no casualties.

At 0800 hours, the Stars and Stripes and the Rising Sun were hoisted simultaneously at the Japan Self Defense Force airfield as part of the normal morning routine. But this day would be different. Proud veterans of the Battle of Iwo Jima returned to the island they once called a hell hole to attend the "Reunion of Honor." It would be the first time veterans of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th

by a prayer by Rev. John Craven who summed up the emotions of the veterans perfectly. Rev. Craven landed on Iwo Jima with the 4th Marines as a 29-year-old chaplain.

“We have returned to this place, though we vowed never to set foot here again. We have returned to this place to relive the past that has long pervaded our dreams and haunted our sleeplessness. We have returned to honor fallen comrades whose names we gave our sons. We come back of compulsion, drawn by memories and loyalty deep and firm . . . to make fast the bonds that tie us to our dead . . . for consummation, our one last deed to do. Let all the spirits who keep this place hear our footsteps and give us comfort.”

Speeches followed the prayers and introductions. These were led by Lieutenant General Charles G. Cooper, commander of Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, on behalf of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Vice Admiral Kenichiro Koga for the Japan Self Defense Force. Eyes glistened with tears at the eloquent reminder of their bitter sacrifice. And no effort was made to forget the fact that these men had once been mortal enemies.

Lieutenant General Cooper read President Reagan’s message to the veterans. “Spirit, fortitude and bravery abounded on both sides,” he read. “The historical accounts of the battle tell us of the 36 days of fierce fighting and the many thousands of lives lost. Only you who survived know the true toll in losses. You have given us a special meaning for the word ‘courage,’ which is embodied in the deeds of men engaged in action for a cause which requires their utmost loyalty and selfless dedication.”

The commemorative speeches over, all present came to their feet and lifted their eyes to the hill where a lone Marine bugler sounded a doleful taps. Then the monument was unveiled:

REUNION OF HONOR

On the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima American and Japanese veterans met again on these same sands. This time in peace and friendship.

We commemorate our comrades, living and dead, who fought here with bravery and honor, and we pray together that our sacrifices in Iwo Jima will always be remembered and never be repeated.

February 19, 1985
3rd, 4th, 5th Division
Associations: USMC

The Association of Iwo Jima

Closing the ceremony, the Japanese sang the Association of Iwo Jima hymn and were answered by the Marines’ Iwo Jima hymn. With a final ceremonial handshake, the solemnities were disposed with and the trucks and buses were waiting to shuttle the veterans to historical and natural points of interest all over the island. But no one



TOP: Christians and Buddhists offer prayers . . . “that our sacrifices on Iwo Jima will always be remembered and never be repeated.”

ABOVE: Veterans proudly display their country’s flag as they dedicate the memorial to all those, living and dead, who fought with bravery and honor on Iwo Jima.

RIGHT: Iwo Jima veteran Donald J. Michaud returns to Iwo Jima, this time in peace.



budgeted. The consensus seemed to be, “Let them wait.”

At first only a few of the boldest, most outgoing veterans stepped out of the group,

Continued on page 82

WATERPROOF WEAPONRY

Salvo Jungles Put Stainless Steel to the Test

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



Left to right from the top, Randall LeMay .45 ACP, Walther PPK/S .380 ACP, American Derringer .44 Special and Colt Python .357 Magnum.

HANDGUNS have little relevance to the military COIN ops conducted in El Salvador, or any place else for that matter. The recent imbroglio over the U.S. XM9 trials was largely overblown by gun writers and politicians, mostly fashion victims who have seldom if ever suited up for the field of battle. From Israel to Angola, when experienced

warriors dress to fight, the pistol often stays in the BOQ and an extra water bottle gets snapped onto the web gear. The

pistol as a wardrobe accessory for the soldier on a long hump isn't that popular.

But with their increasing defeat in El Salvador's rural areas, communist terrorists again are inflicting bombings, kidnappings and assassinations on towns and cities, bringing handguns back into vogue. Brutal violence as a political statement is once again an ever-present danger in the streets of San Salvador. But when donning Jordache jeans and a Lacoste shirt for a casual weekend stroll through the Metro Centro shopping mall, toting an MP5 submachine gun seems just a bit *gauche*.

As much as I like my Bagwell Damascus steel Bowie and despite its artistic beauty, it's a bit too personal for this occasion. In such an urban setting, packing a piece just makes more fashion sense.

Salvadorans carry just about every type of handgun you can imagine. Yet in Central America — where 85 or more inches of rainfall a year makes rust and corrosion a constant problem — stainless-steel firearms are still relatively uncommon. Recognizing the region as a great natural laboratory for testing stainless-steel pistols, Editor Bob Brown heartily endorsed my plan to test and evaluate four representative examples of what has become almost a mania.

Two decades ago, Smith & Wesson introduced the stainless-steel Model 60 Chiefs Special J frame revolver. The *pistola de acero inoxidable*, as it's called in Spanish, has never been my choice. My objections largely centered around the increased price, the galling problems which quickly degraded trigger tuning, and its redundancy in most environments.

Three years in El Salvador have caused me to rethink my position on stainless steel. I have seen new handguns reduced to rusted hulks in less than a year — the finest bluing pitted until it resembles the volcanic Salvadoran landscape and factory nickel spalled off in large flakes.

Then I learned that oxide processes are being developed to darken bright stainless-steel surfaces on weapons. SOF chose four pistols of the more than 100 now available to represent state-of-the-art in stainless: the Colt Python revolver (.357 Magnum), the Randall LeMay (.45 ACP), the Walther PPK/S (.380 ACP) and an American Derringer (.44 Special).

WALTHER PPK/S

The double-action Walther PP (Polizei Pistole) was introduced in 1929. While not the first double-action self-loading pistol, the Walther PP soon earned its mark as the very best. Possessing the same disassembly system as the earlier Model 8, it was still quite revolutionary for its time. Safety was the keynote. The Walther could be carried with a round in the chamber and the hammer down without any possibility of an accidental discharge. Operating by unlocked blowback, only the first round needed to be fired double-action. A loaded-chamber indicator in the form of a pin which protrudes from the rear of the slide was an added safety feature (not found on models in .22 LR).

The safety lever is mounted to the left side of the slide. It points forward in the Fire position and downward, covering a red dot, for Safe. If applied while the hammer is cocked, it will lock the firing pin and drop the hammer onto the safety lever shaft which prohibits firing. Somewhat disconcerting, this should always be done with the pistol pointed in a safe direction. When the safety lever is again pushed forward to the Fire position, the trigger will jump forward to the double-action position. A disconnecter prevents firing more than one round at a time, although a few experimental selective-fire models were produced.

The slide remains to the rear after the last shot. There is no slide stop lever. After a fresh magazine has been inserted, the slide must be pulled back by hand and then released. The single-line box-type magazines hold seven cartridges in calibers .32 ACP and .380 ACP and eight rounds in caliber .22 LR. Magazines are of two types — one with a metal floorplate, the other with a plastic finger extension. The



ABOVE: American Derringer .44 Special: 'A nostalgic sheep in wolf's clothing.'

BELOW: 'Mercenary' shoulder holster with Randall LeMay .45 ACP pistol worn by author while visiting Salvadoran A-camp.



BELOW: Salvadoran Army sergeant test fires the Randall LeMay .45 ACP stainless-steel pistol.





ABOVE: Walther PPK/S .380 ACP shows slight muzzle flash in full recoil.

BELOW: SAS-type leg holster with parachute web belt and Colt Python .357 Magnum.



BELOW: Test-firing the Walther; fame from GI booty and James Bond movies.



magazine release catch is located on the left side of the frame to the rear of the trigger.

The PPK (Polizei Pistole Kriminal) version was created in 1931. While using the basic PP mechanism, the weight, overall length and magazine capacity were all reduced. The steel back strap of the frame's grip was eliminated. One-piece wraparound molded plastic grips were substituted.

By the end of World War II about 375,000 of both models had been manufactured at the Zella-Mehlis factory, most in caliber 7.65mm (.32 ACP). Many thousands were brought back to the United States by returning G.I.s. They were highly prized trophies (especially the PPK), along with Lugers and Walther P38s. Fritz Walther continued to manufacture the PP and PPK after the war through the French firm of Manufacture de Machines de Haut-Rhin (known as Manurhin since 1950). In 1961, Walther moved to a new plant in Ulm, West Germany and began producing under the name Carl Walther Sportswaffen Fabrick. Most of the West German production was imported under the Interarms logo.

Importation of the PPK version ceased in 1968 when it failed to meet the BATF's factoring system. These regulations have blocked the importation of many other fine handguns — from the Browning .25 ACP pocket pistol to the 9mm Glock 17 (recently rejected.) The BATF's rather arbitrary point system resulted in the creation of the PPK/S, which is basically a PPK slide and barrel mated to the PP frame. This satisfied the imperial wizards and sales have remained brisk — a function of the excellent design and the public's exposure to G.I. booty and James Bond movies.

Two years ago, Interarms (Dept. SOF, 10 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22313) introduced a stainless-steel version of the PPK/S in caliber .380 ACP (9mm Kurz). The pistols are manufactured for them by Ranger Mfg. in Gadsden, Alabama. A version in caliber .22 LR is about one year away.

When the Model 60 was introduced by Smith & Wesson 20 years ago, very little besides 300-series stainless steel was available to gun makers. While still used to make tableware, it cannot be successfully hardened by heat treatment. This caused triggers and sears to wear, in some cases after only a few hundred rounds. The new 400-series stainless steels can be hardened to the same levels as the ordinary carbon steels. Interarms has taken full advantage of this new technology, as the various components of the SS PPK/S are fabricated from three different 400-series steels — 410, 416 and 420. The trade-off is that 400-series steels will discolor under extremely adverse conditions.

The top of the slide has been given a matte finish, the remainder of the slide and frame an attractive high gloss polish, all of which contrasts nicely with the black plastic grips. The magazines provided to me were electroless nickel plated. In the future, the furnished magazines will be stainless steel. Some consider the reflective qualities of stainless-steel firearms to be a serious compromise when tactical concealment is necessary. But handguns usually are concealed and/or holstered until used. Their bright surfaces thus are of less consequence than on a rifle or shotgun.

But for those still bothered by this, stainless-steel satin black finishes are available from Clinton River Gun Service (Dept. SOF, 30016 South River Road, Mount Clemens, Mich. 48045) and others.

The PPK/S sights are fixed, front and rear. The front ramp and rear square notch each have a red aiming dot. These are the best sights I have ever used on a small backup pistol.

At 23 oz., the PPK/S is but 2 oz. heavier than the stainless-steel SIG-Sauer P-230. The barrel length is 3.2 inches and the overall length is 6.1 inches, slightly more compact than the P-230. The suggested retail price, complete with one magazine of each type, is \$449. Stainless steel costs extra.

Disassembly takes just a few seconds. Clear the pistol and place the safety lever on Safe. Pull down on the front of the hinged trigger guard until it clears the frame. Push it sideways so that it rests outside the frame. Pull the slide back

completely. Lift it up and allow it to move forward, under control, to clear the barrel. Withdraw the recoil spring off the barrel. No further disassembly is required for routine maintenance. The barrel is permanently fixed to the frame and does not move during the slide's rearward movement. Reassemble in the reverse sequence.

Five hundred rounds were fired through this pistol in El Salvador. The full metal jacket (FMJ) cartridges functioned without stoppages of any kind. The first several magazines of Winchester Silvertip 85-gr. Hollow Points exhibited sticky feeding of the first round when the slide was jacked by hand. When I learned to stop riding the slide and released it at the very first instant of its forward travel, the problem disappeared. This was good news, as the Silvertips expand more reliably than other .380 ACP hollowpoints and we need all the help we can get with this marginal caliber. My recommendation for this cartridge is a Glaser Safety Slug up the snout and a magazine full of Silvertips.

With its fixed barrel, the PPK/S' accuracy potential is quite high for such a small pistol. The balance and handling characteristics are excellent. The trigger pull weight on my specimen is a very crisp, but heavy, 6 lbs. in single-action. The double-action pull weight is quite heavy as well — beyond the capacity of my scale to measure — probably about 14 lbs. However, it's smooth with no "loading" at the end of the stroke. I think we can all live with that in a backup pistol. If not, take it to a competent pistolsmith.

I carried the PPK/S in a Model H-1LS ankle holster made by Cobra Gunskin (Dept. SOF, 133-30 32nd Avenue, Flushing, NY 11354). The full-grain leather holster is molded to the pistol for which it is ordered. The thumb snap and other hardware are a non-reflective matte black. The genuine sheepskin pad is backed by a substantial foam liner. The 2-inch wide holster strap and elastic upper calf support use velcro fasteners. Very comfortable, very professional and only \$36.95.

AMERICAN DERRINGER

The American Derringer is a nostalgic sheep in wolf's clothing. Modern double-barreled derringers owe whatever mystique they may possess to the famous over-and-under Remington derringer in caliber .41 Rimfire Short. Invented by William H. Elliot, it was manufactured from 1865 until 1935. Its superimposed three-inch barrels and stubby bird-head grip instantly identify it to anyone who has ever watched the "Maverick" TV series. The .41-caliber 129-gr. bullet moved out at only 520 fps — not much stopping power here, even at close range. Not much penetration either. And since it would rarely exit the target, some shootists smeared garlic on the lead projectile, believing its chemical reaction with lead would cause gangrene in short order.

Alternate firing of each barrel was achieved by a unique saw-toothed ratchet wheel mounted with the hammer. Every other tooth was higher. The pawl was fixed to the hammer by a pivot and its other end was the rimfire firing pin. Each time the hammer was cocked, the ratchet's unmatched teeth moved the firing pin either up or down. In the case of a misfire, cocking the hammer would move the striker to the next cartridge. Simple and reliable.

After WWII, the Great Western Arms Co. of Venice, Calif. began producing an almost exact external replica of the Remington derringer in .38 Spl. There were two firing pins to accommodate the center-fire cartridge, but the firing-pin selector wheel was retained. I had one of these 30 years ago. I got rid of it because its firing mechanism was too fragile. No longer made, they are now worth about \$350 to collectors.

Hi-Standard followed with its double-action derringer in both .22 LR and .22 Win. Magnum. About 10 years ago, the American Firearms Mfg. Co., Inc. in San Antonio, Texas, produced a stainless-steel derringer in caliber .38 Spl. An almost identical derringer is now manufactured by the American Derringer Corporation (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 8983, Waco, Texas 76714). It is produced in 23 different calibers:



Colt Python: A favorite of U.S. lawmen.

.22 LR, .22 Win. Mag, .22 Jet, .25 ACP, .223 Rem. (5.56mm NATO), .32 Auto, .30-30 Win., .38 Super, 9mm Ultra, 9mm Parabellum, .38 Spl., .380 ACP, .357 Mag, .357 Maximum, .41 Mag, .44 Spl., .44-40 Win., .44 Mag, .45 Win. Mag, .45x2.5-inch (snake gun), .45 Auto Rim, .45 Colt and .45 ACP. A single-shot model is made in the heavy .44 and .45 calibers and 5.56mm NATO. There is a 7.5-oz. lightweight model with an aluminum frame in .38 Spl.

With the exception of the Hi-Standard, all of the Remington-type derringers are hinged at the top of the barrels and swing up to load. This requires pivoting the pistol 180 degrees. If you can't do the job with two rounds, forget it. You've just bought the farm.

The American Derringer's frame, barrels and other components have been beefed up considerably to safely handle modern center-fire cartridges. The overall appearance is massive and bulky. Whatever aesthetics the Remington possessed are gone. In my opinion, some of these chamberings (.30-30 Win., 5.56mm NATO, .41 and .44 Magnum) border on the hallucinogenic.

High-strength ivory-colored plastic grips are standard on the .38 Spl. model. The others are equipped with either rosewood or zebrawood grips. Three finishes are available: high polish, satin or sandblasted combat grey. The standard model weighs 15 oz. The overall length is 4.8 inches with the 3-inch barrels (a model with 4.1-inch barrels is also available). The retail prices range from \$172.50 (.22 LR or .22 WRM) to \$369 (.41 or .44 Magnum), depending on the caliber.

We chose a derringer in .44 Spl. with high polish finish and rosewood stocks for test and evaluation. First introduced in 1907, the .44 Special cartridge has seen a recent rebirth of interest. Powerful and superbly accurate, it was never loaded to its full potential by the factory. When handloaded, it is versatile enough for target shooting, self-defense or hunting. I felt it to be the best compromise chambering for this type of pistol. We used moderate handloads consisting of the Lyman #429215 gas check bullet, hard cast with linotype metal, propelled by 6.5 grains of Unique with Remington-Peters cases and primers.

Before loading this pistol, the hammer should be placed on the half-cock position and the hammer block safety engaged by means of the button on the left side of the frame. Pivot the barrel locking lever 180 degrees counterclockwise and swing up the barrels. After loading, swing the barrels down and rotate the barrel locking lever over the nub on the trigger pin. To fire, the hammer must be pulled back to the full-cock position for each round. The extractor is located between the two barrels on the left side. It must be operated manually.

When I received this pistol, the trigger pull weight was

unacceptable. The trigger could be released only if tremendous force was applied to its lower tip. Sometimes, when moved from half-cock to full-cock the hammer would not fall regardless of the amount of pressure applied to the trigger. This potentially fatal flaw disappeared after 100 rounds were fired. The trigger pull weight also reduced somewhat after two boxes of ammo. The hammer remains difficult to full-cock with one hand.

Fixed sights are integral with the barrel forging. They are of small consequence, as this three-meter gun is best pointed at the target and accompanied by three fervent Hail Marys. The recoil was severe, but not unbearable. Myself and a Salvadoran sergeant who participated in the test fired 100 rounds in less than two hours.

I thought to carry this pistol loose, in the pocket of a sport jacket, but discovered that this uncontained mode of carry invariably resulted in the barrel locking lever rotating to the unlocked position. I don't think you would care to fire it with the locking lever in this position. Furthermore, if the pistol turns over in your pocket, you might draw it with the barrels pointing at yourself. In which case, you could only hope your opponent would just die laughing.

I am not impressed with the American Derringer. If you must have a backup gun in .44 Special, buy a Charter Arms Bulldog. The 2.5-inch barrel can be chopped by another $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch without compromising its close-range accuracy potential. This will leave you with a 17 oz., 5-shot belly gun, (although not in stainless steel in that weight) which will reach out farther with greater controlled hit potential and far less felt recoil.

RANDALL LEMAY

The Randall LeMay .45 ACP pistol comes to us under the auspices of John Moses Browning, a retired Air Force Chief of Staff and the California aerospace industry.

After three-quarters of a century, Browning's locked-breech recoil-operated classic requires little explanation or justification.

General Curtis E. LeMay, who honchoed the Strategic Air Command (SAC) from its inception in 1948 until 1957, had periodic visions of a chopped pistol that would place the powerful .45 ACP cartridge in a more compact and concealable package than provided by the standard M1911A1 Government Model. To this end, Air Force Marksmanship Unit armorers were directed to execute his concept using M1911A1 pistols and a few AMT stainless-steel frames. The project rested in limbo until the Randall Firearms Company (Dept. SOF, 12826 Pierce Street, Pacoima, CA 91331) entered the arena.

With the exception of the LeMay models, the Randall pistols are based on original M1911A1 specifications. Drawing on its parent company's (Ken-Air, Inc.) 40 years of experience in the field of aerospace and missile components, Randall has combined the very latest stainless-steel alloys with high-technology heat treatment to produce the ultimate blend of corrosion resistance and friction-free operation. Every component, including pins and springs, (except the walnut checkered grip panels) is fabricated from stainless steel. The magazine body and follower spring are made of 17-7 stainless steel, with 304 in the floorplate. The unique 10-groove barrels are machined from 416. The slide and frame both utilize 17-4 PH, but with different heat treatments.

The Randall LeMay weighs 35 oz. in either .45 ACP or 9mm Parabellum. The barrel length is 4.5 inches, with an overall length of 7.75 inches. The Colt Combat Commander weighs 36 oz., has a barrel length of 4.25 inches and an overall length of 8 inches. The grip portion of the Randall LeMay has been shortened to yield an overall height of 6.9 inches — this at the expense of one round, for the magazine will hold only six cartridges (7 in 9mm). The Colt Government Model has an overall height of 7.4 inches. All Randall pistols are available in mirror-image lefthanded



versions.

The LeMay is available with either fixed or Millett low-profile adjustable sights. I chose the fixed high-profile combat sights, which, although stainless steel, are black oxide finished. The front sight is a wide serrated blade. The rear sight is square notch with rounded sides to inhibit snagging. It could do with a little more rounding on its front and rear surfaces, yet the target can be acquired rapidly with these sights. Adjustable sights are neither required nor desired on handguns designed for serious social purposes.

The sides of the frame and slide are polished. All other exterior surfaces have a glass-beaded matte finish. The right side of the slide is marked "MODEL GEN. CURTIS E. LEMAY ****." Most of the machine and investment casting marks had been removed from the SOF test specimen. The front of the trigger guard has been squared and serrated. I do not make use of this feature and feel it to be a marketing gimmick. If you want it, it's there. The slide's ejection port has been enlarged and polished. This custom feature prevents denting of the empty cases and will sometimes eliminate stoppages caused by a failure to completely eject.

The hammer is a ring type in the Colt Commander configuration. The beavertail grip safety is the best I've ever used. After more than 1,000 rounds, I had not even a trace of hammer bite. As this pistol should always be carried "locked and cocked," I do not advocate de-activating the grip safety,



Salvadoran junior officer after firing Colt Python .357 Magnum.

no matter what some gun school commando tells you. The flat main spring housing is smooth.

The long trigger was factory adjusted to my specification of a clean breaking pull weight at 3 lbs. The enlarged thumb safety lever is excellent and moves on and off with the ease of a noiseless light switch. The trigger has an over-travel stop adjustment. While the pistol's overall component fit was satisfactory, the trigger exhibited slightly excessive vertical play. This neither affected performance nor was it noticed during firing sequences.

The LeMay model is normally equipped with an extended slide stop. This is a mistake. When employing the proper Weaver two-hand hold, all too often the thumbs will press down on an extended slide stop and permit the slide to travel forward before a new magazine has been inserted (of course, we always change magazines before the last round has been fired anyway — don't we?). My LeMay was provided with a normal-size slide stop.

During preliminary function testing, conducted before my departure to El Salvador, the pistol immediately exhibited the so-called "Commander syndrome." The slide stop would all too frequently jump up in the middle of a firing sequence and engage the slide's stop notch. This turns the weapon into a

single-shot dueling pistol and simply won't do for the streets of San Salvador. A function of the recoiling forces and the slide's relatively short travel distance, it is, gratefully, easy enough to correct. My pistolsmith, Burke C. Hill, Jr., ground a small dimple into the rear face of the slide stop. This gives the spring-loaded slide-stop plunger a better bite on the slide stop. Be careful. Grind too deep and the magazine follower won't have enough strength to pivot the slide stop upward after the last round has been fired.

The 6-shot magazines are of two types. One is of standard configuration, the other has an extended floorplate — bent downward to serve as a finger support. I don't need the latter type, but Mr. Fatfingers might. The extended floorplate magazines sent to me seat slightly too deep in the magazine well. Care must be exercised that they have locked on the magazine catch when inserted. The magazine followers are rounded to improve feeding. Seven-round Randall, Colt or whatever magazines can be used, but they will extend approximately one inch out the bottom of the magazine well. The magazine well's sides have been beveled. Magazines drop freely out of the well when released.

The 10-groove barrel is fitted with a solid bushing. That's good. (The Colt Series 70 Mark IV collet bushing is a disaster.) The Randall's only departure from Browning's original design is a full-length recoil-spring guide rod. This has caused a minor rhubarb among gun writers/experts. It seems they are impeded from constantly checking the chamber by hooking their thumb in the trigger guard while pressing back with the index finger on the recoil-spring plug/bushing/slide assembly. I have watched some shooters repeat this drill with a frenzy approaching that of Lady Macbeth. There are other ways to retract the slide enough to inspect the chamber.

In addition, these worthies seem more than a little befuddled by the slightly different disassembly procedures. Just remove the magazine and clear the chamber. Place the pistol on a padded, solid surface, muzzle up. Using the heel of a magazine, press down on the inner edge of the recoil-spring plug. Continue downward pressure on both the plug and slide until the guide rod's clearance slot is exposed. Rotate the barrel bushing clockwise with the left hand till it's halfway through the slot. Reposition the thumb of your right hand over the recoil-spring plug. Rotate the barrel bushing completely through the slot. Proceed as usual. Reassemble in the reverse order. Now, that wasn't so difficult, was it? However, I doubt if the full-length guide rod adds much to spring life. If it proves to be beyond your mechanical comprehension, buy a Colt-type plug and guide rod.

After the slide stop was modified there were no further stoppages of any kind during the 1,000 rounds logged through this pistol. All the more remarkable, as 200 rounds were reloads using a 185-gr. wadcutter bullet backed by 6.5 grains of Unique. This ammunition has been lying around my reloading room for a decade or more as it has failed to feed consistently through any and all .45 ACP pistols I have ever attempted to fire it through. I don't even recall the brand. Nonetheless, the Randall LeMay — throated and feed ramp polished by the factory — digested this garbage like a barnyard boar hog. One hundred rounds of Winchester Silvertip Hollow Points also shuffled right on through the Randall. The remaining 700 rounds were assorted lots of G.I. ball. My recommendation is the Winchester Silvertip cartridge. Its 185-gr. bullet with a crease-folded aluminum jacket travels at 900 fps. It avoids over-penetration, but will give your opponent a very severe migraine.

Regardless of ammunition, the Randall printed into 2.5-3 inches at 25 yards — more than adequate for the intended purpose. Felt recoil is at the same level as a Colt Government Model or Combat Commander. The old-style checkered wood grip panels bear no escutcheon. They're just right.

Continued on page 92

GURKHA



Bren MGs are still the squad automatics of Britain's Nepalese soldiers.

Britain's Bushmasters in Belize

Text & Photos by David Mills

DESPITE an abiding popular misconception, those hard-fighting Gurkha troops of the British Army — blooded most recently in the brutal fighting for the Falklands — are *not* mercenaries.

They are — and have been since 1948 — a respected and renowned unit of the regular British Army. These diminutive and deadly soldiers from Nepal serve in subunits of Her Majesty's Brigade of Gurkhas in assignments ranging from ceremonial guard at Buckingham Palace to security duty in Belize, a former British colony in Central America. Given their hard-earned reputation for loyalty and tenacity in combat, it's no wonder the British Ministry of Defense never hesitates to include Gurkha units in rotations to potential powderkegs such as Belize.

The most recent unit to serve there (1984) was 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles. They carried with them a long combat history that includes action in the Malayan Emergency (1948-60). They appeared to have lost none of their Southeast Asian jungle expertise during service in Central America. That may seem odd for soldiers many people would presume are uncomfortable out of the thin air and snowy reaches of the Himalayas. It's just another example of the misconceptions that abound concerning Gurkhas.

While most Gurkha soldiers are indeed recruited from areas of Nepal that range from 5,000 to 8,000 feet above sea level (an area which encompasses just a fraction of Nepal), they can — and do — come from all parts of the country to join the ranks. The 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles are an example of the intense desire many Nepalese youths have to serve with the regiment.

The men of the 10th are mainly Rais and Limbus recruited from eastern Nepal. Competition for acceptance is fierce. As many as 2,500 men typically apply each year for only 200 slots in the ranks. Many who fail selection for a Gurkha formation simply cross the border and join Indian Army battalions. Others, unable to face the shame of returning to their villages, drift into the slums of Terai.

Belize, formerly British Honduras, draws divers, tourists and beachcombers.





Gurkha exercises were designed to warn Guatemala that the British intended to support the UN's self-determination resolution for Belize.



Joining the twentieth century, heliborne Gurkhas have modern mobility.

Strong family connections are a feature of the 10th PMOGR as they are in other Gurkha formations. Many of the soldiers join brothers, uncles and even fathers serving in the same battalion.

Such intense loyalty to a single unit is entirely understandable given the record of achievement chalked up in British military history by this celebrated Gurkha formation. The 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles trace their history back to 1887 when a military police battalion was raised by the government of India to protect the Kobo Valley in the western extremes of Burma. It was activated as the Kobo Valley Military Police Battalion and composed almost entirely of volunteers from Gurkha units of the Indian Army.

In 1890, a special force was formed to serve in Burma as part of the Madras Army patrolling that turbulent part of the Empire. One of the units selected was the 10th Madras Infantry, which had been raised at Vellore in 1766. Regular officers and soldiers of the unit were replaced by Gurkhas from the Kobo Valley Police Battalion who adopted the colors and mess silver of the 10th Madras Infantry. The new unit was designated the 10th (Burma) Regiment of Madras Infantry on 1 May 1890, the date marked as the founding of the current regiment.

Although the regimental designation has undergone many changes over the years, the figure 10 has always been retained.

The present title was received in 1950 from King George VI in recognition of the achievements of the regiment in World War II and to mark official affiliation with the Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment), The First of Foot.

A second Gurkha battalion was raised in 1908 and in World War I both battalions were involved in continuous combat action in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Gallipoli. During WWII two additional Gurkha battalions were raised and all four were blooded in heavy fighting in North Africa, Italy and Burma. The regiment won more awards for gallantry, suffered more casualties and spent more time in action than any other regiment of the Indian Army.

After British rule in India ended in 1947, the 10th and three other Gurkha regiments were selected for continued service with the British Army. The regiment moved to Malaya in 1948 and stayed in the thick of the fighting there until the end of the emergency in 1960.



Gurkhas were heavily involved in the Indonesian confrontation of 1963 and spent 56 months in action during which they killed more enemy troops and won more awards for gallantry than any other regiment in the British Army. It was during this brutal combat that Lance Corporal Rambahadur Limbu won the Victoria Cross, Great Britain's highest decoration for gallantry in action. He is now a Captain with the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles.

Gurkhas also served gallantly in action against Argentine troops in the Falklands and are currently handling peacetime duties in Hong Kong, Brunei and Cyprus.

Gurkha units are mostly led by British officers who compete just as fiercely as Gurkha recruits for assignment to the Brigade. A British subaltern serving with 10th PMOGR in Belize indicated his choices for assignment after graduation from Sandhurst were listed as, (1) The Gurkhas, (2) The Gurkhas, and (3) The Gurkhas.

He got his wish and the admiration of his classmates.

In the chain of command between Gurkha troops and their British leaders are the officers and NCOs of the Queen's Gurkha Officers. They are responsible for purely Gurkha matters of religion, custom and other ethnic concerns.

Legendary jungle fighters, Britain's Gurkhas appear in strange places — like Central America — since the Empire has shrunk.



THE MILITARY KUKRI

Reverse-curved Kukri has ridden at Gurkha sides for centuries. Sample courtesy SOF Exchange.

Among military buffs and fans of distinctive weaponry, Gurkha means Kukri and vice versa. Gurkha troops are known and recognized by the deadly blade which has become an integral part of their combat kit. But there are just as many misconceptions about the Kukri knife as there are about Gurkhas.

A high-quality Kukri is usually presented to a Gurkha boy by his family or friends when he leaves his ancestral village to enlist in the British Army. That's as it should be, given Gurkha heritage. The Kukri is much more than a formidable military weapon. Almost every adult male Nepalese carries one on his belt. It is his most valued and valuable tool for coping with the rigors of country life. He uses the Kukri as most American outdoorsmen use a favorite skinning or working blade as an everyday tool.

If a Gurkha boy is accepted for service in a battalion without a Kukri he will be given one from military issue. There are some significant differences in the two models. The civilian versions typically feature various hilts which may be made of bone, wood or brass. They are carried in a variety of scabbard styles which generally reflect the artistry of the knifemaker.

Military issue Kukris are all made at The British Gurkha Regiment headquarters and training establishment in Eastern Nepal. They are handmade by craftsmen who use an ancient bellows and hand-powered grinding wheels to fashion the durable blades.

Hilts on issue Kukris are all fashioned from animal horn brought into Nepal from India specifically for this purpose. The hilt is shaped and mated to the blade which features a full tang for strength. Hilt and blade are secured by a brass pommel. Each handmade Kukri is tempered and

sharpened to a razor-edge by hand. When a Kukri leaves this primitive factory it is rigorously tested and finally stamped with the date and "ORDEP NEPAL" as a seal of acceptance.

Gurkha military scabbards are fashioned from sturdy wood and covered with tightly stretched black leather. They feature a brass clasp and tip. Each military scabbard features extra sheaths at the rear for carrying a smaller skinning knife and a fire-starting steel.

The craftsmen in East Nepal must turn out 200 Kukris for military use each month. The weapons are shipped to the Training Center, Brigade of Gurkhas in Hong Kong. Any rejects after rigid inspection are promptly returned to Nepal. Like most handmade items these days, Kukris come with a full warranty.

That doesn't necessarily mean they are the greatest fighting knife on anyone's battlefield. The issue Kukri will not behead an ox in the hands of the average Gurkha soldier despite the pictures of this activity that are regularly circulated in the Western press. This ceremonial sacrifice, carried out at the annual Gurkha festival of Dasher, is done with a specially made, extra-large Kukri reserved for the purpose.

Still, the Kukri *is* a formidable weapon. With scabbard, the issue Kukri weighs 23.6 ounces. The knife alone weighs 15.7 ounces. It is 16 inches long overall with a blade length of 11 inches.

Mastering the Kukri takes practice and most Gurkha troops spend a great deal of off-duty time in the pursuit of excellence with the weapon that means so much to their regiment. They also suffer a number of self-inflicted wounds from careless handling of the Kukri. ✂

CHUCK KRAMER

IDF's Master Sniper

by Dale A. Dye



Although much has been said — pro and con — concerning the Israeli drive into Lebanon to evict PLO terrorists in the summer of 1982, the IDF has been reluctant to discuss lessons learned by their troops during the bitter fighting in Beirut. What has been revealed about tactics employed in "Operation Peace for Galilee" has focused on the use of armor and combat aircraft.

Few students of the conflict in the Middle East realize the IDF — at the urging of an American emigré named Chuck Kramer — used the anti-PLO operation as a test and evaluation opportunity for a new cadre of highly trained snipers. The chain of events leading up to employment of snipers in Beirut and their record in combat is an intriguing story and an insight into sniper operations around the world.

Former Executive Editor Dale Dye, a veteran of service in Beirut with the U.S.

Steyr SSG favored by Border Police special anti-terrorist unit covers the sensitive border between Israel and Lebanon.

marine contingent of the Multinational Peacekeeping Force, cornered sniper and special security consultant Chuck Kramer [19 Coventry A, West Palm Beach, Fla. 33409] for this exclusive interview.

SOF: How did Chuck Kramer become a sniper to begin with?

KRAMER: I was at West Point in the early 1950s and I was small-arms instructor there. I shot a lot and this was just a logical extension. [After moving to Israel] I got involved personally with the commander of the Israeli border police. They were forming their anti-terrorist unit. At that time the border police were all Israeli combat soldiers. I was put in charge of their northern-area sniper group which I recruited from veteran

border policemen. I trained them with weapons available to the police which were Austrian bolt-action Steyr sporters with their own scopes. Everything was bought commercially.

North of the border right opposite Lebanon was Rosh Hanikra, Hanita and other settlements where the terrorists came in close and fired light mortars, Katusha rockets or what have you. For days we'd lay an ambush for these guys. They'd come up real close with a stolen Mercedes Benz and park the car, open the trunk, take out the mortar and shoot, then put it back in the trunk and leave. I worked as an independent *y'hiedah* [Hebrew for unit] attached to the border police headquarters which was outside of Tel Aviv. I had then got friendly with the commander of the newly formed anti-terrorist unit and he absorbed our unit by osmosis. The border police commander felt that there should be a massive sniper infusion into the anti-terrorist unit. We just started building this unit by trial and error based on everybody's past mistakes and actual field experiences.

When was this?

This was in the late 1970s. We put on a demonstration for the Prime Minister and he asked, 'How many rounds do you use up?' I said, 'Well, we burn out around 200 or 300 rounds a day per man.' He asked if that wasn't too expensive. I said, 'Well, Mr. Prime Minister, how many rounds a day is your wife worth?'

What sort of training did you put the anti-terrorist snipers through?

I made the targets as human as possible. I changed the standard firing targets to full-size, anatomically correct figures because no Syrian runs around with a big white square on his chest with numbers on it. I put clothes on these targets and polyurethane heads. I cut up a cabbage and poured catsup into it and put it back together. I said, 'When you look through that scope, I want you to see a head blowing up.' Everybody was satisfied. In retrospect, the time I spent in the anti-terrorist unit and in the army was the only actual time I felt I was doing something positive for the defense of the country directly. It was an experience.

Now how did you switch from border



Kramer relaxes in the prone with M26.

security operations to the Army?

At the airport I had met "Rafool" Eitan. I hadn't seen him in years. He said, 'I heard some good things about you. Why not quit this kid's stuff and come to the Army?' So inside of a week he had become chief of staff and with three phone calls I was in the Army.

We re-initiated the Army sniper course which was a total and absolute disaster. They were using outdated Czech bolt-action Mauser rifles made back in the 1930s. Their concept of sniping was completely antiquated. The Army had no snipers but on paper they had a lot.

We started from scratch with a semiautomatic sniper rifle modified from a Russian AK-47 manufactured in Israel, the M26 Circus. My own personal theories were that a sniper must maneuver with the smallest unit possible as the Russians do. Their sniper schools have never been closed since 1936. [In the IDF] there was no sniper doctrine per se. The Egyptian sniper school was very British-oriented. The Syrians had bought a lot of Steyrs — thousands of them — and were equipping them with the best optics and night-vision devices they could get while the Israelis weren't doing much of anything.

So you were facing two basic problems: tactical employment of snipers — which you felt was wrong — and chronic lack of equipment.

The 1947 independence war in Jerusalem where the Jordanians were shooting across the border at the Israelis was what they remembered. The crux of the matter actually sat in their officer training schools. There was no sniper indoctrination. They didn't ask the right questions. How do you employ them [snipers] as another tactical tool for the small-unit commander? In 1947 in Jerusalem they were shooting from the rooftops with old bolt-action rifles after watching for a month. But there was nothing cut and

dried and no tactical doctrine involved. So my initial plan was to convince the Army to buy enough of these M26 rifles, collect them and start a real good, serious sniper school in the desert. The sniper would leave with his own personal weapon zeroed and rebuilt for him and return to an ongoing training program in his organic/original unit.

You weren't interested in the Remington Model 700?

Not whatsoever. It's just another bolt-action civilian sporter configured for military application. It just didn't work well.

What was the training designed to produce for the IDF?

I built into this course everything I felt was necessary to get top-of-the-line, first-round-kill snipers who could take targets at zero to 1,000 meters. I had about 50 applicants for this course. We took the youngest guys who had the most time to serve. I asked all the right questions. 'We want you guys to look through the scope and just see a target and watch his head being blown apart. Are you going to do this?' If there was any slight hesitation, I'd tell them to go home because I didn't have time to fool around. We shaved it down to 15 guys because we only had 15 rifles at that time.

What were the tactical changes that you wanted to make?

I would make a combat sniper who would maneuver with the smallest possible infantry unit — an eight- or nine-man squad — and indoctrinate the officer in the tactical use of snipers as another tool for his small unit.

What was the course like?

We were working by hook or by crook down by the Tzahal Officers Training Course Base No. 1, living in tents out in the desert for 13 weeks or so. We were indepen-

dent but officially attached to the infantry paratroop school. We built our own 1,000-meter range on a desert plateau. Anything I wanted, I did. I drew 2½ million rounds of ammunition and we started shooting. I told the students, 'If you guys won't kill anybody I aim you at [with the] first round, then out.' There was an *esprit de corps* because they were getting good at this.

What weapons were you using?

We used old weapons. We used Jim Leatherwood's old ART scopes. I had targets especially made for us in desert brown which were totally invisible to the naked eye. We changed the target configuration for the entire Army using realis-



Kramer's Beirut beat: Sniper's post overlooks PLO positions in woods below.



tic, human-size targets in colors which the enemy is supposed to wear in the desert. At the end of the course these guys would acquire in 20 seconds a target at unknown ranges and fire one round into it and kill it, any range, any place and not under formal range conditions. They were usually under a pile of rocks on the side of a mountain shooting down. They also ran the close-combat course from two meters to 30 meters [to train for] instinctive fire with a sniper's rifle. They were set to kill all comers with our own equipment. They told us nobody runs a close-combat course with a 14-lb. sniper's rifle and nobody's got semiautomatic sniper rifles. They told us nobody shoots moving targets with an SLS [Starlight Scope] at 200 meters in the head. But we did all that. We were as trained as you could possibly get. We made an accounting and determined during the course each guy fired about 20,000 rounds.

What sort of point-of-aim did you teach the snipers?

The target presentation ran this way: at 300 meters, head shots mandatory; at 300-500 meters you had chest-high targets only; 500-700 meters you had 1/2 of a target and at a kilometer, a full-size figure. We did it that way because in combat that would logically be how an enemy would present himself.

If the head was available, the point-of-aim was the head. The general rule held that the killing zone was pocket-to-pocket from the top of your breastbone down your sternum or stomach, sort of a big rectangle. I said, 'I don't care where you hit them within that area, you're going to kill them.' I felt we're not shooting these guys between the eyes unless that's the only available shot. You're looking to *kill the enemy* so you put one round right in between his second and third buttons and he's dead.

What was the role of the sniper in a tactical situation as you explained it to the young lieutenants who visited the sniper

IDF sniper-unit practice with Israeli M26 rifle and ART scope.

course?

That he [the sniper] is your long-range personal artillery above and beyond the range of your personal weapons. In any situation where you needed a long-range, accurate, first-round kill to survive in a sort of unexpected tactical situation, you had in your possession a tool with which to do this. It's not like in the States where you could pick up air support or artillery fire from base. It was not available. You had to suffer with direct tank fire if [fire support] was around at all.

Tell me about a tactical situation in the Middle East where a squad leader or a platoon leader would need his sniper.

Let's say you have an infantry platoon maneuvering in the southern Negev and they get pinned down in a tactically disadvantageous position by long-range heavy-weapons fire, a .50-caliber machine gun or equivalent. They're shooting at you from 1,000 meters and just holding you down until they can get accurate mortar fire. With a squad-level sniper, a lieutenant could send this guy out to a good position of concealment to discover the source of the incoming fire with whatever optical aids he had. If nothing else, he could use his 6X or 12X scope to spot and then just eliminate the source of the extended-range fire.

Go for the gunner?

Yeah, or shoot very close to him. The sniper could probably kill these guys with three rounds or they'd run away and then you'd just go along your merry way. If the enemy was employing tactical snipers in place of heavy weapons, our guy would assassinate them at a totally extended range just like the Indians. Kill the radio operators first, then quietly shoot all enemy soldiers in the head at ranges up to two and three times the effective range of their personal

weapons. It would be like Custer's Last Stand with 70 guys laying out there dead, each killed by one bullet.

We were discussing snipers used *en masse* as a force or snipers used singly on the smallest tactical unit. A corps commander could just deploy a massive group of snipers attached to a larger unit to hold an area of miles. The snipers could just mark a path or killing zone of one kilometer in depth in which nothing moves for whatever tactical or strategic advantages you wanted.

What were your equipment recommendations for this new cadre of IDF snipers?

That takes some background. A combat sniper works at ranges far above the accurate, combat-effective range of the personal weapons of the infantry trooper. So he is working where their business stops. He is working out at a half-kilometer and farther with deadly accuracy day and night to get one-round kills under any conditions. That was the foundation of *everything* I did. All my input and data bears this out. All we were lacking to pull it off was the equipment.

The reticle I designed was an optical ART ranging device. I built the ellipse and the center of the vertical based on human head dimensions which are 27 by 15 cm. That is the basic size of a human head. You would fit the target into an ellipse until the target's head filled it [the ellipse]. Combat sniping is far afield from anti-terrorist stuff where you know the exact range. The equipment should be geared to help a sniper hit targets of unknown sizes and unknown shapes at unknown ranges day or night.

So you had a cadre of trained snipers and a modicum of adequate equipment. Tell me how Chuck Kramer got involved in the 1982 war.

My reserve unit was attached to one of the divisions of the northern area command. War started without the snipers. IDF opinion on sniping was — and is — still based on the old British adage that snipers use static positions. Anyway, I had gone north with a reconnaissance company. We'd gone up to the eastern part of Lebanon to Kfar Choonah east of Jezinne. The heavy fighting [in that area] was just about over in June of 1982.



View of the shelling of Beirut from high-rise-roof sniper's nest.

The political pressure had just about stopped everything. We were interested in infiltrating terrorists who were running away from Beirut to get back to Syria.

We were about 90 clicks up into the Be-kaa in some little mountain town when I got a telex from the Chief of Staff [Rafael Eitan] ordering me to Beirut immediately. I ended up in the Beirut University up on the mountain which had been taken over by the paratroop infantry commander. I was assigned to a paratrooper unit above the airport. It was very loose. They said, 'Okay, Chuck, go out there and see what you can do.' No orders, nothing. Just, 'Go see if this is worth your while.' Things had quieted down at that point. There was just a lot of artillery firing night interdiction into the area north of the airport and lots of PLO Katushas falling all over the place. The area was liberally sprinkled by small-arms fire day and night.

What did you discover about sniper position and observation in Beirut? Did you work snipers in two-man teams or singles?

Two-man teams for protection. They [the snipers] get kind of tired. You can't stay at an SLS for more than a couple of minutes. One protects the other's back. Even though they all carried handguns, that wasn't much help when a guy is standing in back of you with a 'Kalatch' [Kalashnikov]. I just put two guys together who were at ease with each other and worked well together and who wanted to be a team. No one was forced on anybody ever. If there were any mavericks nobody wanted, we got rid of them. There were no lone wolves and after you do this for awhile, you know how to play the game with your partner. These guys would gather intelligence data as trained observers. That was part of their job. Infantry guys who are sent out to observe will always miss something where an experienced sniper will pick this up.

And these observation techniques — scanning and spotting, the business of looking for certain tell-tale signs — were all covered in training?

Most of the guys in my unit were older and had been through five or six wars plus various campaigns. They knew what to look for. Even if a sniper doesn't shoot, he has his hand in the game, pulling in intelligence data. We did that in Beirut for about a week. I had sent these guys out and we weren't supposed to shoot — just watch. They poured in a wealth of data which even the intelligence people had missed.

What happened with your snipers then?

At the end of July I said, 'You'd better get my unit up there [into Beirut] again.' I was told there are no targets in Beirut. They [the IDF] are using direct tank fire. I said, 'I've got 30 fully equipped guys and we'd better get into this thing again.' I told them not to worry, my guys would find plenty of targets. This was at the time when the PLO were cornered in West Beirut and in the port. Everybody knew that Tzahal was



Beirut's broken buildings offer IDF snipers their best cover and their greatest danger.
Photo: Jim Morris

massing to drive them into the sea.

We got orders to proceed immediately to Beirut to the division headquarters. They [the snipers] fired about five or 10 rounds just for zero, loaded on an old bus and proceeded up the road. We pulled up to headquarters and there was total confusion about what to do with us. They were laying the final plan for the assault on West Beirut out for regimental and battalion officers and they had amassed a lot of power. I had never seen so many tanks in my entire life. They had this 20-block area rigged out bumper-to-bumper.

They wanted to go in there and just push them [the PLO] right into the ocean. We were to take 20 snipers. I split them up into three units. I had about 10 guys with me. It was just a big mess: a lot of small-arms fire. We were east of the museum about two blocks. The first night we were there we found ourselves in the wrong place and got in the middle of this huge artillery barrage. We were on the ground floor of a six-story, unfinished building. It was one of many sleepless nights. Welcome to Beirut.

Were you at this point prepared to use your snipers in the classic tactical role?

Right. I was assigned an area south of the hippodrome which was right opposite the French Ambassador's house and had a lot of PLO infiltration. We were to make this area too hot for them to go into. The idea was to push them as far west into Beirut as we possibly could while the artillery just shot down buildings.

I had the largest sniper force of the entire Israeli Army at that point. The numbers at

the end of the war indicated there were 47 snipers employed in the entire action involving more than 100,000 troops. I had over 20 [of the snipers] under one command. All the rest were dispersed throughout the entire force that was operating in Lebanon.

We got most of our [intelligence] data from either [Christian] Phalange or Lebanese Army units. The guys went out in pairs and looked every day in specific areas. The word had gotten out to the other side. Word [of the IDF sniper presence] spread like wildfire and these areas did quiet down immediately because they knew somebody was looking for them. They realized there was an organized group of Israeli snipers looking for them and this didn't sit too well.

We proceeded to stay there about a month until the multinational force had come in. We watched the Marines come into the harbor and then the French who went into the hippodrome to the ambassador's house. We saw the PLO open up on the French. There were French paratroopers here and there. We stayed until the general election and we assumed there would be a total uprising by the PLO after Gemayel was elected unani-mously. We felt at that point the PLO would make a concerted effort to either break out or start an uprising in the country. We alerted all my forces to contain this thing in a small area in West Beirut. We stayed there until there was some sort of plan to evacuate the PLO and we were given orders to stop shooting. Small-unit commanders said, 'Rifle fire is going on so kill as many as you can.' I said, 'What I don't know doesn't hurt me and if you want to squeeze off a couple for *auld lang syne*, just go ahead and do it.'

How did you control the sniper teams?
During this whole operation I would be in



contact by radio with these guys and a confirmed kill [witnessed by two men] was recorded as 'one down.' I'd record the range for my own records. Most of the good hits were at extreme long range and most of the kills were made at 600-800 meters. These guys [the PLO] were getting very wary by then. Nobody was walking around and the only guys who were there were PLO. There were no civilians in that area. Then they wised up and were running around in civilian clothes and had stashed their weapons. We spotted a guy on a motor scooter who seemed totally clean but who had weapons stashed in five or six apartments.

Were most of these kills at 600 or 800 meters people in buildings? Were you shooting framed targets or were you shooting open targets?

Both. It was a matter of targets of opportunity. Targets appeared at almost any range but there wasn't much close-range stuff. These guys were too smart for that. They would stay very clear and they were using motor scooters a lot. I got two on a motor scooter by sheer luck. I was watching this big wide avenue and sure as hell I saw this big motor scooter coming toward me about a kilometer away with two guys on it. They're both carrying SKS carbines slung over their shoulders, two shopping baskets full of food and these canvas carriers for the

Israeli Army and Christian militia forces attempted to control southern Lebanon with guards and outposts, but snipers were an important positive control on terrorism. Photo: Jim Morris

RPGs on front of the motor scooter. I lined them up and shot one off by sheer instinct. It was a classic shot. The round must have gone through the driver and then into the passenger. They went out of my sight picture and with that I lifted my head up and said, 'Hey, score two for the old man.' Then I looked down the road and I saw another guy getting up to run across the street. I squeezed off one round but I didn't hit him that bad and he fell down. I just squeezed off a second round. It was sheer luck: in a matter of minutes, two kills.

I documented all the things we were lacking at the end of this month period [in Beirut] and we left after the Marines had settled into where they were [a triangular perimeter around Beirut International Airport].

What new things about sniping did you learn from your experience with the Israelis in Beirut?

The Israeli Army had no experience fighting in big cities. All our sniper training and indoctrination paid off. I was proven totally right.

Let's concentrate on specifics.

All my theories were proven true in Beirut as far as sniper effectiveness in big cities goes. I wish I'd had 200 [snipers] instead of 20. *If the equipment was better, I would have had more opportunity to perform better.* I found to my surprise the PLO had very poor snipers using equipment almost six or seven years old in comparison with modern Soviet equipment. They worked alone with no sort of training. They were partisan. They just went out to shoot as many Israeli soldiers as they could. I found out — even as bad as they [PLO snipers] were, the reaction of the Israeli soldier to being fired on by a sniper was terror. It was terrifying to feel that you were under a sniper's scope. Units were stalled for hours while the commander was screaming for air support to take out a guy firing a plain Kalatch with no scope at 150 meters right into his position. I found the Syrians had good snipers. They had good equipment and good training.

After 30 days with 20 men in Beirut, what was the number that you put down?

Most of the firing was done in the first three days. The other 26 or so days there were countless short cease-fires that were constantly violated by the PLO. That would cause the fighting to flare up again. In the first three days, we had 16 [kills] verified, all at extended ranges, 32 probables and countless war stories. This all occurred in about 70 hours in the first three days we were there. The closest shot was 150 meters — a total fluke with a sniper rifle — where one of the snipers lined up on this guy and found to his horror he didn't have a round in the chamber. He pulled the bolt back on his M14 and eased it in and the bolt didn't lock. That happens with an M14. He lined up, squeezed and *click*. The guy he was shooting at heard the click and ducked back inside a building. The sniper jacked the round out cursing in Hebrew, chambered another and waited. An Israeli air strike came over Beirut and these guys [the PLO] ran out like kids to watch the airplanes. That's when he shot him.

Based on your experience in Beirut, do you think the IDF learned anything about the employment of snipers?

They have learned that you *can* employ snipers. They're not as glamorous as a lot of other things, but they work. I don't see any born-again Christians in this saying, 'Wow, let's make this a first-rate effort to incorporate one sniper per platoon and really train these guys because this is the way to go.' It's nowhere near that level where I envisioned it would have been after they realized the fact that for the huge amount of troops employed there were just 47 snipers in the entire Peace for Galilee operation. It may be just slightly better now but I doubt it.

What about lessons learned regarding sniper equipment?

You've got to understand the prejudices sniper advocates were up against in the IDF to understand that situation. Major commanders were from the old school of 'follow

me, automatic weapons fire, close and kill; snipers lay on roofs in static positions.' One of the northern-area commanders had gone up for some anti-terrorist missions in Lebanon. He was a non-sniper person at the beginning and he was a convert when he left the infantry division paratroop school [which he once commanded] where snipers were *the thing*. His name was Yossi Koller and he was a hard-nosed ex-paratrooper that eventually got the ball rolling.

We had tested every theory imaginable with every piece of equipment we had and made recommendations. When we saw the M26 was an impossible dream, I took 5,000 M14s out of stores, had my instructors shoot for a week and took the 80 best rifles I could find. I had a purchase order for 30 modified M14s which I helped design myself.

What were some of the modifications?

We took a stock M14 and rebuilt the plastic stock to the configuration of the M26 and extended the cheek rest to where your head was kept up and the scope was set off to the side. We hung a suppresser on the front, mounted a Harris bipod and tuned the trigger action slightly. That was the best you could do.

By the way, did you have any left-handed shooters?

No, but the fact that the cheek rest was designed in such a way that a left-handed shooter could just lean over slightly and fire comfortably would have made them no problem. My exec was a lefty. He fired an M26 all day long. He would just lean his head over and fire it from the physical right side of the weapon rather than the left side with no inconvenience whatsoever. The open sights were available if you had an optics malfunction.

What scopes were you using?

They were these 4X tubes made by some Swiss outfit and totally unacceptable. We had the configuration with a vertical post that totally blacked out a [long range] target. The increment arrangements were so coarse that one click either way at 300 meters and you'd be off your target. These were 100-meter and 50-meter scopes that were bought in the late 1940s and reconditioned six or seven times. They were ready for the scrap heap. We had a couple of Leatherwood's ARTs and I had one on my own rifle which I had built from scratch. We had given each man a personal SLS. These were the big bombs used in Vietnam which were then almost 20 years old and totally unacceptable for sniping. I had epoxied the mount attachment to the SLS which made for a beautiful side-mounting but the flexibility in the mount was disastrous. Poor accuracy way out there.

I designed a concept for an efficient night-vision device in which visible optics are replaced with an electronic image, so you're not concerned if the sun is shining or not. You have a heat-generated image of the target with highlights on the heart and head. That's all a sniper needs. The off-the-shelf equipment is available. The hardware is there but nobody wants to make it. The



Rooftop billet in Kfar.

market is small. Nobody really is interested and there are not enough guys around who have the experience to push this thing.

The efficient use of snipers in combat or anti-terrorist operations is really an unknown factor. What is catalogued or written as doctrine is 30 or 40 years old — not only in the Israeli Army but in the American Army as well. Nobody makes a sniper-grade weapon other than the Russians and theirs isn't that great either. I feel at this point there is no good equipment made anywhere in the world specifically for combat sniping. Modified sporters or rehashed military weapons won't get it anymore. The caliber is wrong and the optics are wrong. It's all made for deer and bear hunting. The night-vision devices are for multiple-use heavy weapons. Nobody makes the gear for true, serious combat sniping.

What's needed?

A semiautomatic rifle just for sniping. Not a 7.62 but a .338 Winchester magnum which is heavier [in cases] where you back off your range to 1½ kilometers. Olympic grade ammunition. You know the Marines custom-reload their [sniper] ammunition. They pull out the M113 bullets and replace them with more accurate, precision stuff. ART scopes from 6X to 18X where at a half-kilometer you've got a big head sitting in there ready to be busted.

Why suppressers for combat sniping?

Simple. The suppresser does a lot of things for you. First, you're getting your recoil down to the level of a .22. You squeeze off that first round and what you see in that scope stays right where it is. If you miss you can get that second round out in

1/10 of a second rather than have the recoil just obliterate your sight picture and force you to line up all over again. Your target is not going to stand there and let you kill him a second time.

So the suppresser is more a recoil-reduction device?

There's more to it than that. A sniper has problems with muzzle blast. The suppresser eliminates this totally. You're also diffusing the sound. You won't get this supersonic crack diffused completely but you can reduce it to a degree where when you're standing on the other end you're not too sure where the round is being fired from. Also a suppresser eliminates muzzle flash at night.

What sort of other equipment do you recommend for combat snipers?

Well, in Beirut flak jackets were mandatory but I don't think you can use them. They're hot. You can't get the rifle in there [in the shoulder pocket]. I don't say they shouldn't be used at all, but a sniper should have a modified flak jacket or an *ahfoad* [Hebrew for vest] in which he would have an open area for stock placement, all his pouches in the rear so his front is flat and he can get down in prone position, a built-in shoulder holster and a carryall pouch in the rear for binoculars or what have you. It [the standard issue flak jacket] bothers the hell out of a guy laying in the prone position for an extended period of time. Once he gets edgy, he's concentrating on being edgy and he's missing a lot of stuff.

The weapon's got to be designed where his line of sight is natural without lifting his head up. Most American, British and German rifles shoot from the heads-up position. The equipment must be designed to be user

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A TALE OF TWO BATTLES

The Story from Both Sides of the Wire

by Sam Zaffiri

Writer would like to interview former North Vietnamese soldiers for book. Will pay. Write: SAM ZAFFIRI, 707 Samantha, Normal, Illinois.

About two weeks after I ran the ad in Ban Tin, a Vietnamese community newsletter, I found myself staring up at a delapidated four-story brick apartment house in a part of Chicago known as Uptown. There was nothing unusual about it from this perspective. It was a typical Chicago low-rent apartment building — broken windows, torn screens, a sagging front porch and a front yard filled with dog shit and beer cans. They were all over the city. But there was one thing different about this tenement.

It was home for a man who had once sworn to kill Americans with the AK-47 assault rifle he had been issued as a soldier in the North Vietnamese Army. He was former Private Vinh of 3rd Company, 2nd Battalion, 141st Regiment, 7th Division of the North Vietnamese Army. He had traveled hundreds of miles on foot from Hanoi, through Laos and Cambodia and into South Vietnam to kill men like me. There was no way of knowing if I'd ever faced Vinh on a jungle battlefield, but he had something to tell me about others who did.

Since the war ended, we've heard from General Vo Nguyen Giap and senior NVA or VC field commanders, but not much has been revealed about what it was like to be an enemy grunt. That was the gap in our understanding of the war that I wanted to fill. Former Private Vinh had said he'd help.

A short, thin, handsome man with slightly graying hair met me at the door of a small apartment with an uneasy smile. Unlike many Vietnamese immigrants, Vinh did not seem self-conscious or apologetic about his squalid surroundings. After years of living in jungle camps, tunnel complexes or bunkers, he considers his new home luxurious.

Vinh let me know in short order that I

would not be able to use his real name. He had parents and a younger brother living on a collective farm near Hanoi and he feared for their safety. The former NVA trooper was also worried about the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service as well as the Vietnamese community of Chicago which does not welcome communists — reformed or otherwise.

Although he was never a rabid communist, Private Vinh served honorably with the 141st NVA Regiment for three years until he was badly wounded by shrapnel in the leg. His unit's surgeons could not repair the wound and Vinh was shipped back north for more extensive treatment. While he was at home, the war ended and the veteran was offered a civilian job in Saigon aboard a

commercial vessel. There he met and befriended another northerner who was anxious to escape communist rule.

They sailed together, ferrying arms and ammunition to NVA units occupying Cambodia, and waited for a chance to escape. One night in Saigon when the master and loyal crew were ashore, Vinh and his buddy stole their vessel and headed for Singapore. They were turned over to immigration authorities and both men claimed to be South Vietnamese. The trail to freedom in the U.S. led through Hong Kong, Tokyo, Seattle and finally to Chicago where Vinh struggles to hide his past and lead a normal life.

Still, he was a soldier for too many years through too many hard times to completely forget the war. Like any combat veteran, he can be persuaded to tell war stories when he feels comfortable with his company. For most of a morning, I sat and listened to the way the war was fought by common guys like me on the other side. It was all fascinating, but I focused intensely on his story of an attack made by his unit on an American artillery firebase in the III Corps area northwest of Saigon.

As a lowly "fighter" — the title given infantry privates in the NVA — Vinh was not told much about the tactical situation facing his unit in Tay Ninh and Binh Long Provinces. He thinks the fight at the American firebase was sometime at the end of 1968 or the beginning of 1969. The U.S. unit involved may have been part of the 1st Infantry Division (NVA troops referred to the unit as the "Red Elder Division") but he considers it more likely that the firebase defenders were from the "Lightning Striking Division," the NVA name for the U.S. 25th Infantry Division (Tropic Lightning).

SOF's research indicates the unit was most likely a battery of 105mm towed howitzers belonging to 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery ("Dragon Regiment") firing support for the 1st Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division operating near the Cambodian border.

SEEKS OLD NVA

In 1969, Sam Zaffiri served as a Big Red One mortarman in Vietnam. This article is taken from a book he is writing tentatively titled "Voices from the Killing Ground." Zaffiri describes his work as an oral history which "will counterpoint the experiences of American and North Vietnamese soldiers." But finding former NVA troops outside Vietnam isn't easy, he said. He's located a few in CONUS. Sam, who has a master's degree in English, lives in Illinois and among other endeavors reviews theatre productions by veterans' groups, including "Tracers," a play written and performed by Vietnam vets which opened on Broadway in February. SOF readers may have seen his byline in *National Vietnam Veterans' Review*, published and edited by Colonel Chuck Allen (USA, Ret.), who is also SOF's contributing editor for Vietnam Veterans' Affairs.



WHEN my infiltration group arrived in southern Cambodia, a number of men and I were assigned to an infantry regiment. When I arrived at my new company, they were bivouacked about five miles from the border, living in thatched huts. The regiment was a large one with nearly 800 men in three battalions, along with sappers, recoilless rifles, heavy mortars, machine guns and a medical group. [Vinh indicates his uniform and equipment at this point consisted of green fatigue shirt and trousers, sandals made from truck tires, a green pith helmet, AK-47 assault rifle, pack and ammunition pouches worn across the front of his chest. He had been issued four magazines for his weapon and carried a basic load of 300-400 rounds. In his unit, each infantryman was also issued four to six stick-type ChiCom grenades which were carried in double pouches attached to the belt.]

I was very lonely when I first arrived at my new company, and very scared. There were some happy moments, though. I found an old school friend of mine, Ha Van Duong, serving in another platoon. Duong was recovering from malaria when I arrived and at first he didn't recognize me. When he did, he gave me a hug and fired off a lot of questions about life in our village.

In those days, Duong had been the most handsome boy in the village. Now his cheeks were hollow; his eyes sunken. The bravado and arrogant sense of humor of his early days in school had given way to cynicism and a fatalism. He had almost given up

Firebases were often assigned the task of supporting infantry operations with artillery. Photo: AP/Wide World

hope of ever returning home alive.

When I first joined the company, things were busy. Recruits were arriving every day and the training regimen was intense. After our evening meal, we sat around and listened to lectures by our political officers. They were supposed to build our morale and occasionally we were subjected to self-criticism sessions during which we were encouraged to admit our faults and shortcomings. The lectures were very boring and were no different than the ones I had heard all through training in the North. It was a complete waste of time.

The regiment had recently been in a few battles with the Americans and the political officers trumpeted them as great victories. Late one evening I had a few moments to talk with Duong and from him I learned the truth about the battles. The regiment had recently been in a countersweep operation against the Americans and had suffered hundreds of casualties. There had been a number of terrible battles before that, he told me, but this one had been the worst. American firepower had been so fierce that he had decided to call it quits and escape the first chance he got. The experience had convinced Duong that he could not survive many more battles.

Reaching into his pack, Duong pulled out

a Chieu Hoi pass that he had picked up on a trail, one promising safety and good treatment by the South Vietnamese to any communist who turned himself in to the government. He wanted to know if I wanted to go along.

Ordinarily, you wouldn't speak so openly with another soldier about such a subject and apparently I was the first soldier Duong had mentioned it to. He trusted me because we both came from anti-communist families and both our fathers had suffered under the communists. Duong's grandfather had died during the brutal land reform program in 1954.

Should I go with him? I was afraid of being caught. I had heard rumors about a soldier who had been caught trying to escape. The cadre staked him out over a giant ant hill and I wasn't thrilled over that prospect.

Still, Duong was persuasive and told me over and over again that if I didn't go, I would eventually be killed anyway. He told me it was the time of the "great bloodletting" and that the communists' only interest was in throwing away thousands of lives in order to kill as many Americans as possible and make them quit the war. Many thousands of NVA soldiers were going to die in the next two or three years, but he was not going to be one of them. Many times he told me, "I had to live under communism, but I don't intend to die for it." I believed what he was saying, but the fear of capture was still overwhelming.

My problems were solved for me, though, because a few days later we were told that the regiment was going to launch an attack on a new American artillery position which had just been constructed near the border. When I heard the news, my heart sank and I was flooded with fear. I thought, "If I am so afraid now, what will happen when I actually go into battle?"

There was no way to tell, but I couldn't rid myself of the fear I felt, the fear that I was going to be horribly wounded or killed. I was filled with a terrible fear that I would be killed and then thrown into an unmarked grave like a dog. My family would be unable to pray for my spirit.

In preparing for the battle, the cadre constructed a clay model of the American position with all the details of the position in place. The American position was circular with bunkers all around the outside perimeter. Inside were artillery pieces and a number of mortars and some tents that served as command posts. An American infantry battalion was operating out of the artillery base, sending out patrols by day and ambushes at night.

For the next two or three days, we were briefed by our company commander and other company cadre on how we were to make the attack. Everything was planned to the smallest detail so that everyone knew exactly what he was supposed to do during the attack. We rehearsed the attack like actors learning parts for a play. Mock bunkers similar to the American ones were set up and we practiced attacking and blowing them up.

The actual plan called for two of the three battalions to attack the American position from two different sides while the third was held in reserve with the regimental commander. Fire support would come from mortars [these were Chinese 82mm weapons normally kept at the 141st CP but issued to assault battalions for attacks. Basic load was 20 rounds per gun], machine guns [RPDs were the standard light weapon for assault units. There was one gun per NVA squad. Vinh recalls they were issued with drum belt carriers from which gunners fed ammo rather than relying on a spring-driven mechanism] and recoilless rifles [these were 75mm weapons normally used to attack APCs and tanks. They were usually located with or near the regimental CP during ground assaults but were sometimes used for direct support of the attacking units. Basic ammo load was 10-20 rounds]. A few heavy machine guns were also set up to defend against helicopters and gunships. [These weapons were also Chinese-made and were issued both on wheeled carriages and tripods. Basic ammo load for the 12.7mm gun crew was 500 rounds].

I had hoped that our battalion would be the one held in reserve, but that was not to be. Not only was our battalion to lead one of the attacks, but my platoon was to be the first one forward after the sappers. [Vinh



AN NVA'S ROAD TO WAR

Vinh is from a small village in Hoa Binh Province. He was drafted into the army at the age of 18 and took his physical at the village temple. When he passed the physical, he was inducted and sent off to a training camp near the city of Hoa Binh.

During three months of basic training, he learned how to fire a rifle, an RPD MG and a 61mm mortar. He also learned how to properly camouflage himself in the jungle, how to set ambushes and how to both manufacture and use bangalore torpedos and satchel charges. He said they only had a few days training in close-order drill as "it was not considered important for jungle-fighting."

After completing training at Hoa Binh, his battalion marched to another nearby training area and spent a month getting ready for infiltration. Here, they were fed all they wanted to eat and trained by carrying rucksacks loaded with rocks up and down hills.

Once properly conditioned, Vinh and the other men in his battalion were issued all the clothing and equipment they would need for the long trip south — rifles, mosquito nets, fatigues, vitamins, anti-malaria pills, cooking utensils, etc. They were also issued ID cards which listed their names, group number and the number of their destination. The men knew by reading this number what their destination was in the south. One number might represent northern South Vietnam, another the Central Highlands. Vinh's number indicated he was going to the area around Tay Ninh and Binh Long Province.

Once equipped, they were shipped by truck to Hanoi and from there by train to Vinh City. From Vinh, they rode by truck west and through a mountain pass into Laos. With the original 300 men in their training group, they were led by guides through Laos and Cambodia, stopping every 15-20 miles at rest stops along the way. The rest stops were usually located near streams where they could wash up, bathe and brush their

NVA soldiers rush to the offensive during a battle in Quang Tri Province. Photo came from North Vietnamese sources and was undated. Photo: AP/Wide World

teeth. At many of the stops mess tents had been set up to feed the infiltrating units.

At first, the trip was not too difficult, but as they got deeper and deeper into Laos, American planes began flying over the trail trying to spot them. Once when they were crossing an open area, an American spotter plane saw them and within seconds a jet arrived overhead and began dive-bombing them. Most of the men managed to get into a ravine, but two men were killed and lot of others struck and injured by flying rocks and pieces of trees.

Vinh says, "We buried the dead men by the side of the road and marked their graves with rocks. As we got farther and farther in Laos, we began to see more and more piles of rocks marking graves. I could not believe how many graves I saw. We also saw a lot of graves at the various rest stops. They were of men who had been left behind after getting weak with malaria and had then died."

It took Vinh and his group about 45 days to get through Laos and another 45 before they arrived at their final destination in Cambodia. There were a few huts here and about a platoon of guards and a number of high ranking officers. Here their group, which was now about 250 of the original 300, was split up into three or four smaller groups. Each group was then led by guides in different directions leading to different destinations. Vinh's group was led by their guide about five more miles to another small clearing under the jungle canopy. This camp was similar to the first one and from here his group was led by another guide to their battalion headquarters and then company bivouacs.

Vinh says that he was in many battles during his time in South Vietnam. He also said he fought against many different American units. Sometimes they knew who they were fighting against and sometimes they didn't.



remembers seeing the sappers preparing lengths of bamboo filled with explosives and a friction cap for use as a *bangalore* torpedo in cutting the concertina wire around the firebase. The sappers had been taught to lie very flat when firing these devices to avoid being killed by the explosion. He also recalls that both sappers and assault infantrymen were issued satchel-charges in canvas or burlap bags for use in reducing American bunkers].

Duong tried to console me. "Do not do anything foolish. If there are fools around you who want to be brave and get themselves killed, let them but don't follow them." He told me that in the confusion of a battle, it was easy to hide and that the cadre had difficulty keeping track of people during a battle. He also told me that if I saw anyone get wounded, my best bet would be to help them to the rear as that was the quickest way to get away from a battle.

I felt better listening to Duong's words, but fear still hung around me. My stomach was so nervous that when the day for the attack came, I could just barely eat a little rice. The company political officer must have seen my nervousness. He came over and talked with me, telling me that I had nothing to be afraid of; that fear was only an illusion that could be conquered. The way to overcome fear, he told me, was to remember why I was going into battle. We were going to drive the "Yankee Imperialists" from our country. I listened to him with feigned interest, but my feelings were just

This 82nd Airborne Division firebase near Hue was part of a network that was designed to keep infiltrating communist forces from reaching Hue. Photo: AP/Wide World

the opposite. It was not the Americans I hated, it was the communists. As far as I was concerned, they were the ones who were invading my country. They were my real enemies.

On the day of the attack, we were all issued extra ammunition for our rifles and extra grenades, then sat around the bivouac waiting. With nightfall, each battalion, led by guides, started toward the American position. Each battalion took a different route and we moved in single file with a few meters between each man. Darkness covered everything and there were no flashlights to light the way. Occasionally someone would trip, making a terrific racket.

We marched for two or three hours until we came to an abandoned village in a rubber plantation and were allowed a half-hour rest. The political officer made the usual rounds talking with the men and encouraging them to be brave and fight hard. He emphasized that if we achieved a great victory tonight, then it was only a matter of time before the war ended. I listened to the political officer's words, but it was no use. All I could hear was my heart beating and all I could think about was Duong's description of the ferocious American firepower. Fear

and weakness crept back into my body. I was sure that I would be dead in another hour.

Things would have been different if I had believed in communism; in the cause of reuniting the North and the South in one country. Maybe then I wouldn't have minded dying. But I didn't. I didn't believe in anything the communists said, and I didn't care if the North or South were ever united. Life would still be the same for me and my family, so why should I want to die for something like that?

Such abstract thought came to an abrupt halt when the cadre came by and told us that we would be nearing the American base soon. We had moved through thick jungle for most of our march, but now we ran into open areas, fields of high grass which we hurried through, heading for the cover of jungle again. Then the world blew apart.

We were crossing one open field when I heard an eerie whistle and a loud explosion. Men screamed behind me. A round had hit right on top of our column. Everyone hit the dirt. I fell flat on the ground but the cadre began running up and down the line screaming for us to get back to our feet. "Move forward quickly or you'll all be killed," they shouted. "An American patrol has seen us. Move quickly."

By now artillery was raining down around us and men were running madly forward trying to get away from it. Despite the confusion, we managed to run across the clearing and back into the jungle. The artil-

lery continued to land in the field behind us. After running hard for another 10 or 15 minutes, we came to what looked like a dry stream-bed just inside the treeline. Beyond the trees was another field and in the center of the field, the American position. The American artillery was still firing, but the shells were passing over us.

A few minutes later, our own mortars opened up, signaling the beginning of the attack. The recoilless rifles followed and then our heavy machine guns. The mortar positions were far behind us but the recoilless rifles and machine guns were in the treeline and firing directly at the American

position. Immediately after our guns began firing, the American guns responded. Only the rolling din of exploding shells could be heard. I don't know what I imagined a battle would be like, but I never realized there would be so much noise.

While our mortars were still firing, our sappers began moving forward. It had been decided to blow holes in the wire around the American position. Men with light machine guns covered the flanks of the sappers and aimed suppressing fire at the American bunkers.

It was time to do our duty. Led by our platoon leader, we then began creeping in a

single file behind the sappers. About half-way across the field, we stopped and waited for the sappers.

The Americans must have known that we were approaching because they began firing their artillery right over our heads just a few feet off the ground so that the shells would explode down on us. They missed the range at first. The rounds went over our heads or exploded to our right. But then a round hit over the rear of our line and I heard some men scream in pain.

Up ahead the sappers were exploding their *bangalores*. I couldn't see them, but I learned later that they blew up the first two

Marine artillerymen pound the enemy with 105mm howitzers. Artillery fire from nearby firebases were often the best part of a day for grunts pinned down by the enemy. Photo: AP/Wide World



layers of wire easily, but two sappers were killed trying to blow the third wire. Finally, a fifth man — one of the reserves — had to blow the last wire.

From then on, everything was like a dream or a slow-motion movie. "Move forward," our platoon leader shouted and off we went. All I remember thinking about as we rushed through the hole in the wire was that I must be in a dream. I could not believe I was taking part in such a thing.

Our squad moved to attack the forward American bunkers and enlarge the breach the sappers had made. We had practiced doing this over and over back in our

bivouac, but as we went through the wire, I forgot everything I was supposed to do and nothing looked familiar. Our squad leader, Sergeant Tran, had been in many such attacks, however, and showed no fear. Firing his rifle from the hip, he rushed the side of a bunker while another man threw a grenade into the opening. Right before the explosion two Americans ran out of the bunker and I shot them.

Right behind me, another squad attacked a group of bunkers to our right. There were more grenade explosions and I saw Americans running out of bunkers trying to escape. Most were shot.

All this happened in an instant, in just a few seconds. It all seemed very strange to me and I still couldn't believe that I was actually looking at Americans and seeing men killed.

All around, more of our troops were pouring through the opening in the wire and attacking the American bunkers. Under the light of flares, I could see that the Americans were abandoning all the bunkers on one side of the base and running back toward the artillery positions.

Our other committed battalion was supposed to have broken through on the other side of the position and destroyed the artil-



There are always two versions of a battle story — one for each side. And it's not every day that you get to read both of them. The camp that was attacked by Vinh's NVA company was not Firebase Becky as far as we can determine, but the circumstances of the battle were much the same and the American version provides an interesting mirror image to Vinh's story.

FIREBASE BECKY

Throughout the dark hours of the early morning, the cries of the wounded and dying, along with sporadic rifle fire, echoed across the jungle clearing. In the aftermath of the short, intense battle there was a certain sense of elation as well as weariness that engulfed the survivors. Riding the rush of adrenalin, we waited for it to happen all over again.

It was the second night on red alert. Around 0300 the morning before, the NVA had begun their first assault.

Mortar and rocket rounds prepped our perimeter as a 12-man sapper team slowly worked its way through several layers of chest-high concertina and tanglefoot barbed wire.

Just outside the wire we could hear screaming NCOs rallying their troops as they prepared to rush the small artillery fire support base when the shelling ceased and their sappers had blown a route into the fortified camp.

Inside the perimeter the grunts of the 2nd of the 8th Cav and artillerymen from the 1st of the 30th were busy themselves. Soldiers hurriedly checked and rechecked claymore wires, firing stakes, rifle magazines and grenades. They grabbed flak jackets and helmets, lowered the howitzer tubes realizing a second attack was only minutes away. What they didn't know was how ferocious the NVA's second attack would be.

"Hey, Logan . . . Logan." The NCO's voice strained in a hoarse whisper as he tried to get the attention of the squad leader inside the perimeter bunker.

A helmeted head peered over the bunker's sandbagged doorway.

"Yeah?"

"Make sure Lewis doesn't burn up the barrel of the '60. He only has one other barrel to work with. There ain't anymore, so fire in short bursts. You got that? Short bursts."

The platoon sergeant was scrambling from bunker to bunker trying to shore up any potential problem areas in his sector. If the coming attack was anything like the previous night, it would all come down shortly after 0300.

The next bunker down the line was tricky. Not being a fool, he wasn't about to stick his head into the opening without advanced warning. Even then, he wasn't sure if he wanted too. Everyone was a



little jumpy.

"Shelliger," he said with a whispered yell into the bunker. "Shelliger." A voice shot back through the dark opening.

"Who's there?"

"Sergeant Costano. Don't blow the fougasse unless it looks like they'll push through the wire. Let's save it until we need it. Got it?"

"That's affirm, Sarge."

Two down. Four to go. All around the fire support base others like Costano were doing what they could to make last-minute improvements or offer suggestions while radio traffic was alive with incoming gunships who were high above on station to support the defense.

At 0325 hours, the inevitable happened. Rockets and mortars rained down on Becky. This time it was worse than the previous assault. The mortar rounds and rockets roared into the camp in a huge barrage.

Hugging knees to their chests or holding hands over their ears as splinters of hot metal flew over the outpost, Logan wondered how long they could take it. The explosions were spine-jarring and he could hear Lewis, the new guy, sobbing in the corner.

The incoming came to a sudden halt and the yells of the Vietnamese and the chattering of their AK-47s brought Logan to his feet while he yelled for the others to take up their positions.

"Lewis! Lewis!" he said as he kicked at the 19-year-old machine-gunner. "Get your '60 up here. Now! Damn it!"

Lewis wasn't moving fast enough for Logan, who slapped his helmet with an open palm. "Come on, move it! Move it!"

"Ben, cover the doorway. Any gooks get near us, you waste 'em." Logan emphasized his anger with a burst from

Aerial view of a U.S. firebase in central South Vietnam. The artillery pieces were set up in the center with a surrounding compound of U.S. and ARVN troops. Photo: AP/Wide World

his M16.

A bright yellow flash split the darkness seconds before a rush of heat and shrapnel from the exploding ammo dump lit Becky in a ghostly glow. Secondary explosions shuddered across the fire-support base. By the light of the burning ammunition storage area and the glow of the artillery illumination rounds, the Americans could see NVA rushing across the open field toward the first strand of wire.

Lewis raked machine-gun fire back and forth to the limits of his firing lines, forgetting the short bursts and trying to shoot as many of the oncoming Vietnamese as he could.

"Short bursts. You'll burn the fucking barrel up. Short bursts," Logan screamed.

Gunships roared down, unleashing rockets and mini-gun fire as backup for the howitzers which were firing fléchette rounds into the rushing wave of North Vietnamese soldiers. Still the NVA closed on the firebase.

An AK round ripped through Lewis' cheek, driving him back against the bunker wall. He screamed as blood and flesh oozed through his fingers. Another new man grabbed a first aid pouch and yelled for cover at the door of the bunker as he rushed to help the wounded soldier.

"Logan, the gun," he yelled to the squad leader. A squad of NVA were through the first strand of wire when a tumbling cloud of burning fuel from the 55-gallon drum brought them to a sudden stop. The fougasse spread over their bodies, killing them instantly.



Logan turned to Benjamin. "Get the other barrel to the 60 and replace it."

"The barrel! The barrel!" Benjamin yelled, wrapping a bandage over Lewis's wound.

"I got it! I got it!" Another new guy sprinted over and dropped the barrel at Benjamin's feet. "But I don't know how to change it."

"What do you mean you don't know how to change it, you asshole? What in the hell did you learn in AIT? Unlock the lever, there." He pointed to the black piece of metal halfway down the back of the weapon. "Pull it up. Now, pull the barrel out but watch out for..."

The new guy never heard the rest of the warning as his hands melted and then stuck to the hot barrel. In a panic he pulled his hands away, leaving layers of seared flesh on the barrel and raw patches of bloodied muscle where his palms used to be.

"What happened?" Logan was screaming while hurrying to reload an M79. The new guy was crying, holding his hands against his chest while Lewis choked back a stifled moan.

"He burned his hands on the barrel," Benjamin said to Logan who was too busy to stop what he was doing. "Bandage your own hands, you dumbshit and get that '60 ready. You hear me?"

Benjamin turned his attention away from the wounded and back to the ground attack. Peering from the bunker's second firing position he saw dark figures concentrating their efforts on the next bunker over from his.

"Gimme that machine gun." But before he could load the feedtray and turn it on the NVA, the bunker exploded, tossing smoke and dust from its dark openings. Satchel charge? He wondered how close the sappers had gotten. Maybe it was a direct hit from an RPG. What did it

matter? The bunker was gone and there was a hole in Becky's perimeter.

In three- to five-round bursts, Benjamin raked the dark figures that massed on the destroyed bunker. To the right of the bunker a second barrel of fougasse lay undisturbed — the det cord had been severed. Benjamin aimed at the drum. It took some 30 rounds to hit and ignite it, but the fougasse eventually exploded, showering the area with flames and fire-light.

Moments later, Dexter from the recon company came sliding into the bunker followed by a frightened-looking medic from the battalion aid station.

"Face wound and burned hands, Doc." The medic went to work while Dexter located some machine-gun rounds and began feeding them into the gun.

"They're in the wire!" Logan grabbed for a claymore's firing device. He triggered a daisy-chain of AP mines sending thousands of steel balls into the assaulting enemy. A group of 10 or 12 NVA soldiers was blown into shredded meat by the detonation.

For more than an hour the defenders held on to Becky, constantly pushing back the two companies of NVA who struggled to take it. The thick, choking smell of cordite and burning flesh hovered over the base. No one was taking any chances that the NVA would give up their assault. Headcounts were taken as officers and NCOs yelled orders over the cries of the wounded and dying. Starlight scopes revealed the NVA were trying to pull back into the jungle as small-arms fire and gunships tried to chase them down. An occasional burst of rifle fire spat into the dawn, but the real ground battle was over at Firebase Becky.

"Will you look at that?" Logan surveyed the base while Benjamin, too stunned to reply, thought of Saturday morning war movies and Japanese soldiers yelling "Banzai" before John Wayne and a commercial made everything better. Only this wasn't television.

"We kicked their ass," said the new guy holding his burned hands out like trophies. Logan's eyes registered disappointment. "Yeah," he said wearily. "it really looks that way, doesn't it?"

Logan felt sorry for the new guy. "The only thing we won," he said, "is a little more time."

"We'll get CIB's for this, won't we?" The new guy had already forgotten the carnage.

It was hard to remain angry with the naive soldier. "Yeah," Logan replied. "I think this qualifies."

At 0700 on 12 August 1969 Fire Support Base Becky was evacuated and closed. U.S. casualties were listed at 17 dead and 49 wounded.

lery pieces, but their attack had been unsuccessful and they had finally pulled back into the treeline. Our position was swarming with troops and all you could hear now was rifle and machine-gun fire. The sky was filled with red and green tracer rounds and flares. I had gotten securely behind one of the American bunkers and was firing my AK-47 in the direction of the American artillery position.

About this time, two American gunships arrived overhead. While one hovered high in the sky, the other dove down and started firing into the area between the treeline and the wire. Rockets exploded in the open field as the first gunship moved off and the other swooped down. We were ready this time. As soon as we got into position, all our anti-aircraft machine guns began firing. Hundreds of green tracers streaked toward the hovering gunship — things got too hot and it moved off. I didn't realize it at the time, but I learned later that one gunship was hit by our fire and crashed in the jungle.

Our cadre was attempting to organize a final assault on the rest of the American positions. Other groups were moving around and attempting to flank the American positions by attacking more bunkers. We seemed certain of success when suddenly the Americans did something unexpected. They lowered the barrels of their artillery pieces and began firing at us point-blank. I'll never forget this because one of our cadre was yelling across at the Americans in English, telling them that we were going to kill them all.

Suddenly there was a gigantic explosion. I was lying behind a bunker and off to the side I could see millions of sparks and long red lines. Two men behind me began howling with pain. One of them stumbled over toward the cover of the bunker, holding his eyes and bleeding heavily. He pleaded with me to help him, but when I went to pull him behind the bunker, there was another explosion and then another. The second one hit my bunker directly, and when I looked back, the wounded man who'd been holding his eyes had been knocked on his back and the top of the sandbags were shredded and torn apart. I didn't know what the Americans were firing at us, but I found out later that it was an artillery round filled with thousands of metal darts. [This was a standard, direct-fire defensive tactic employed by artillery units trying to fend off an enemy attack. Special rounds were filled with arrow-shaped flechettes and time-fuzed to burst only a short distance from the barrel of the howitzer].

They kept firing them over and over. Within seconds, dozens of men around me were screaming in pain. Some of our men tried to fire back at the Americans with rockets [Vinh's squad carried RPG-7s into the assault] and machine guns, but they were unable to stop the American firestorm.

I didn't know what to do. There were bodies piled up all around me and the

Continued on page 95

COLD STEEL

Kali Cuts It in a Knife Fight

by Lynn Thompson



KNIFE fighting is a living art in other climates, and it doesn't look that much like Western fencing. Although fencing developed as practice for what was Western Europe's deadliest form of personal combat, I think it has degenerated into a game of tag. Under rigid rules this game is played with a three-foot-long ultralight blade, and a large guard protects the hand. Fencing attacks, defenses and counterattacks depend on the length of the blade, the diameter of the guard, and the rules of fencing.

Put a fighting knife in a fencer's hand and I think he'll be at a terrible disadvantage. No longer will he be able to hold his opponent at bay with 36 inches of cold steel or depend on his guard to protect his vulnerable fingers. And, perhaps most important of all, no longer will he have a judge to restrain his enemy from kicking him in the crotch or finger-jabbing his eye. It will be too late for him to learn that his favorite techniques with épée or saber just don't work with a short blade and that his famous fencing lunge, when executed with a knife, is easy to evade and counter.

Yet other people in other parts of the world, where the knife is still the favored personal weapon, have refined short-blade fighting into a more deadly form of close-quarters combat. And any traveler will tell you that the Filipinos are at least as dedicated to the knife fight as drama and technical display as anyone in the world.

Filipino Kali is, in my opinion, the most highly developed knife-fighting discipline, and it reflects centuries of practical development. First of all, most classic blade-to-blade encounters begin at long range. Of course, that isn't the nine-foot engagement range of two fencers. We're talking about the few feet apart at which you'll just barely be able to reach your enemy's knife hand with your blade. Your goal at this distance should be to land a distracting blow to any extremity without exposing your own vitals to attack.

Continued on page 100

LEADING EDGE

Lynn C. Thompson is a martial artist who studies Western and Thai boxing, along with Filipino Kali knife fighting. Born and raised in the bush of Northeastern Brazil, Thompson says he saw his first fatal knife fight at the tender age of four. In 1981, he started Cold Steel, Inc., which manufactures the Tanto fighting knife, based on a traditional Japanese design.

Thompson will exhibit his knives and conduct knife-fighting seminars at the 1985 *Soldier of Fortune* Convention.

Author Thompson (left) holds hands close to body, unlike traditional fencing stance, to keep hands from becoming a target.

CHUCK KRAMER

Continued from page 65

comfortable over long periods of time. The optics, the eye pieces, everything should be designed to have optimum user comfort. We're using 19th-century technology in the 20th century.

Give us some wisdom for urban sniping.

You need very good surveillance devices. Upward and downward shooting must be stressed because guys will not shoot low either way. It's very difficult to explain to these guys the physics involved. You've just got to show them. Nobody had the classic shot from being up on the 10th floor and shooting some guy at a nice shallow angle half a mile away. Most of the real targets presented themselves almost level, slightly above or slightly below the shooter at extended ranges.

One of the things I learned about sniping in urban areas was that you tend to position snipers where they can observe and cover likely avenues of movement. We used good, real-time data from the Phalange or the Lebanese Army intelligence which told us these people hit this area by day or night, or they live there, or they're operating out of there. Then you get as close as you want to get, put yourself in a good area for observation and just wait until they present themselves. There's not much new in all that.

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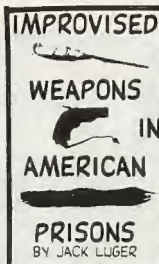
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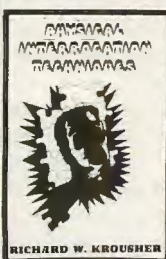
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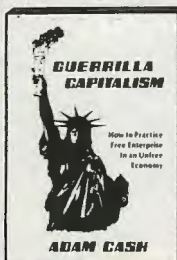
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I feel between 500 and 700 meters is classic sniping. I'd rather have the guys out that far than playing cat and mouse in a window or under a door. Get him way out there where he can't shoot. That has been my rule. I really leaned on the long-range unknown-distance shooting. I had guys shoot locks off doors at 100 meters. Why go through the door and kick it in? You have four guys that shoot in unison at that lock at 100 meters and it goes right through the door. The guy inside can't do a damn thing about it.

How about sniping vehicle crews?

We performed a lot of exercises with the armor — to their chagrin — where we combined snipers with anti-tank missile or rocket launcher crews. Most crews will maneuver with their commander's hatch open as a matter of comfort in the desert. We set it up where the tank commander was replaced [in the cupola] by a three-dimensional head-and-shoulders target with a tank's helmet on. At 700 meters a team of snipers would shoot out all the tank commanders. Immediately, the crews would close their hatches. For that short period of time their observation was limited. At that point, the rocket launcher or missile team would put a killing round into each tank.

We developed a system in the Marines for sniping armor crews in which we took the driver if he was available. We figured someone would have to dismount and get him out of there to get rolling again and we'd have another target.

That can work, but look at it this way. You've got guys in a close area and usually the tank commander is sitting right on top of them with the gunner off to the left and the loader off to the right. If this guy [the TC] gets killed, he is falling down into the turret and tangling up that whole area for 10 seconds or so. The driver — for a few moments — has no communication with anybody because he hasn't heard that shot. The confusion factor alone will just about disable that tank where a rocket firing crew can just about expose themselves totally and get one good round out there and kill the tank.

Snipers could effectively cover a wire-guided missile crew then?

Oh, yeah. The crew has more than enough time because you're loaded and all set to go and you're watching those tanks. When the confusion starts you could just about stand up or kneel in a classic firing position [to bring the missile onto target]. We're not talking about extended ranges. We're talking about infantry-carried tank-killing equipment with time to squeeze that thing off. [The snipers are] working with three or four tanks, killing all the tank commanders at once which makes it even more confusing because nobody's talking to anybody.

I've heard you want to employ snipers against choppers?

We had perfected a technique against the British missile-firing helicopters where you'd have a screen of snipers forward of your tank positions. They could acquire these helicopters at 800 to 1,000 meters as

soon as they came up to sight the tanks. They usually hovered for 10 seconds to acquire a sight picture for the AT missiles. The sniper's job was to present accurate, semiautomatic fire into the right-hand side of the canopy. Whoever was aiming the missile from that position in the cockpit would be totally occupied with staying alive and that pilot would get the hell out of there. If you fire 10 rounds [into the plexiglass] it's like fogging up that entire canopy.

Helicopters in general are easy to shoot down with sniper rifles. The whole thing is put together with a bunch of very complicated, very delicate linkages. You give an experienced sniper team a crash course on how a helicopter is put together and they can squeeze out 20 incendiary rounds which will make that thing fall like a rock. They're firing at all the sensitive parts.

Snipers can also raise a lot of hell with fixed-wing aircraft. We once made a simulated assault on an air force base which had Phantoms on it. We were a kilometer away from 12 F-4s on the ramp. We simply showed the snipers where all the good stuff was in all those Phantoms and they shot for those areas. You're shooting at this monstrous target 30 meters long — you couldn't possibly miss. We told the base commander that snipers had destroyed every aircraft on his base. It was quite a lesson.

You can disable a couple of hundred million bucks worth of attack aircraft for about 20 bucks in sniper ammo. ✕

WANTED

Continued from page 37

behind bars."

Money is definitely the object of the business of man-trapping, but there is also that indefinable high that comes from the adventure of the chase — the rush of playing for high stakes. As the hunter approaches his target, the intensity increases.

"First you lie, cheat and steal your way into his presence," Burton says. "Then there's that day when you find out that you're only a couple of hours behind him. You jump in the car and head his way, hoping that he's unsuspecting and will stay put until you get there. You get closer, and the adrenalin starts pumping. You get out of the car and head for the building.

"And there's the man you're looking for. You're ready for what comes, but you've planned well and there's no trouble. As you drive him toward the station, the dollar signs begin to light up your eyes. You've won another game and the reward is yours."

Bob Burton's book *Bounty Hunter* is available for \$10 through Paladin Press, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 1307, Boulder, CO 80306-1307. ✕

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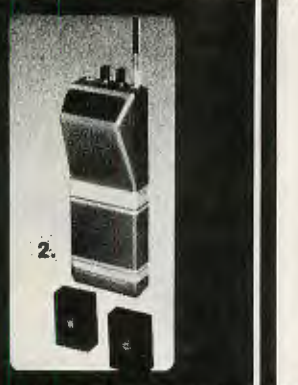
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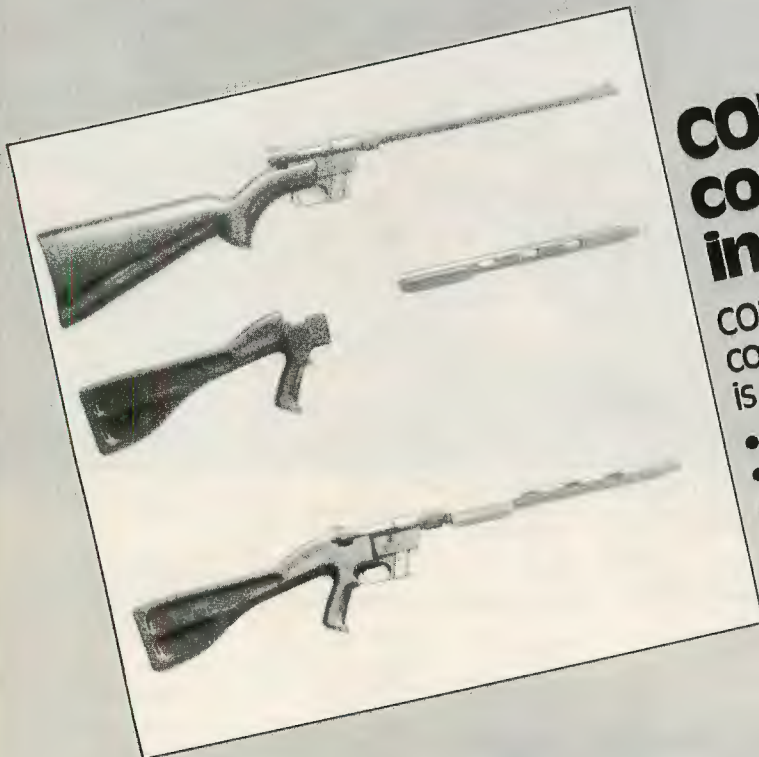
Continued from page 30

caps screwed to the top and bottom. The top cap also serves as a spring-loaded trap which covers a butt compartment that holds an instruction manual, spare parts and a tool for removing the gas plug.

The high-profile front sight is adjustable for windage zero only and is covered by a protective hood of the 98k/G43 type. The tangent-type rear-sight base is welded to the receiver and has an open U-notch adjustable for elevation only from 100 to 800 meters.

The trigger mechanism is housed in the pistol-grip assembly which pivots away, but cannot be removed from the receiver after the buttstock has been withdrawn. The safety lever is located to the rear and above the trigger and can be easily manipulated by the thumb of the firing hand. The upper position is fire ('F') and the lower position safe ('S'); This should have been reversed. The fire selector is a separate control of the cross-bolt type, located above and to the rear of the safety lever. Push to the left for semiautomatic fire ('E') and to the right for full-auto ('D'). Either wood or plastic grip panels may be encountered.

Disassembly is a hallmark of simplicity. Remove the magazine (the release



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latch is operated by a large spring-loaded knurled button on the left side of the receiver just to the rear of the magazine well). Clear the weapon. Depress the buttstock retaining-pin spring on the left side and push the pin to the right as far as it will go. Withdraw the buttstock from the back of the receiver. The trigger mechanism will now swing away. Remove the recoil spring, pull the retracting handle rearward and withdraw the bolt/piston group. Using the buttstock tool, unscrew the gas plug. The stamped-sheet-metal forearm is friction-fit to the gas tube and can be shoved slightly forward and pulled away. No further disassembly by the operator is possible or required. Reassemble in the reverse order.

The 30-rd. staggered box-type magazine was designed to serve as a monopod when firing from the prone position. For this reason, it is sturdy and reliable with reinforcing ribs pressed into its walls along the entire length. The magazine follower provides for no hold-open after the last round has been fired. Today magazines are every bit as rare as the gun itself and will command up to \$75 for one in excellent condition. Most are blued, but I have encountered a few that were painted black.

Numerous contractors were employed to fabricate components for the SIG44. My specimen is stamped with

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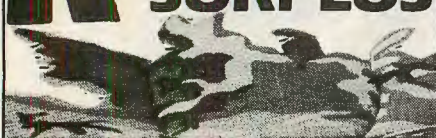
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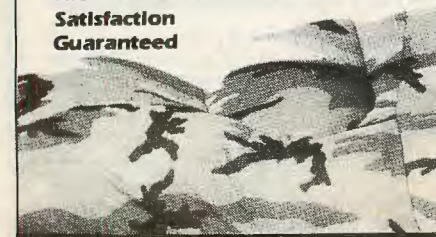
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both the Mauser (SVW) and Haenel (FXO) codes on the receiver. Haenel made the piston group, Lux the forearm, Erste the buttstock caps, Steyr the magazine floorplate and an unknown manufacturer, with the code 'QNW,' fabricated the magazine body. As a consequence, all combinations of blued and phosphate finishes will be encountered on any of the various parts. On most weapons, the receiver and barrel will be Parkerized and the trigger assembly blued.

The StG44 accepts the standard 98k leather sling. Accessories included 30-degree and 90-degree curved-barrel attachments for shooting around corners (for which reason most, but not all, muzzles were threaded and fitted with a protective nut), several different cup-type grenade launchers and the Leitz infrared night scope called the Vampir (ZG 1229). Some researchers have stated that the ZF-4 scope was also mounted, but the only one I have ever seen was attached by an overzealous collector using a counterfeit base.

The 7.92mm Kurz cartridge remains a fine intermediate cartridge, although never fully exploited after WWII. Rimless and bottle-necked, German WWII cases were of lacquered steel with Berdan primers. Most were manufactured by Polte under the 'AUX' code. The boat-tailed, 125-grain bullet with a steel core left the muzzle at 2,300 fps. It was more than adequate for the intended purpose. Small lots of this caliber were produced after WWII by East Germany, Argentina and Spain but no other rifles were ever mass-produced for this cartridge. The VG 1-5, introduced during the last year of the war, some 98k test-bed rifles, a Volksturm experimental stamped-sheet-metal bolt-action rifle and a unique full-auto G43 are the only ones I know chambered for this cartridge.

Although tedious, assembling ammunition for the StG44 today is not difficult. The cases can be formed from 7.62mm NATO brass using a full-length resizing die. The only available bullet now is the Hornady 125-gr. Soft Point (.323" diameter). It will function flawlessly backed by 21.5 grains of IMR 4198. Use the CCI 200 primer or its equivalent.

WWII has been over for some 40 years now, but until quite recently, the MP44/StG44 series could still be encountered on the battlefield in places such as Lebanon and Djibouti. Registered specimens are rare in the United States. An MP44/StG44 in excellent, unaltered condition will bring \$1,200 or more.

At 11.5 lbs., empty, the StG44 is heavy by today's standards. But, it's everything else anyone would want in a modern assault rifle 40 years after its

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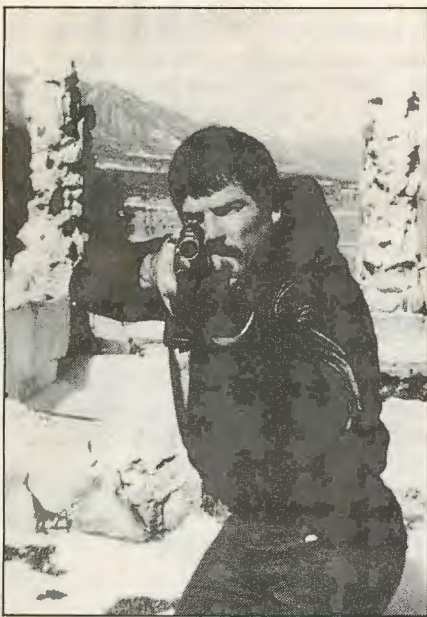


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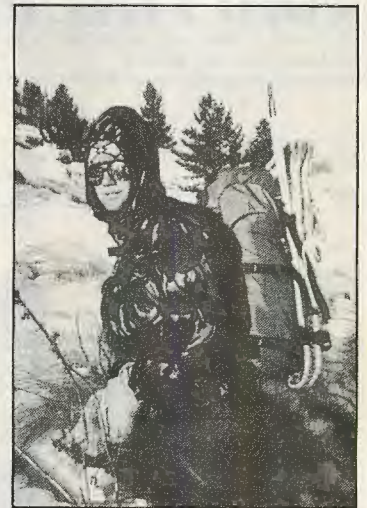


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first appearance. The handling characteristics are excellent. Felt recoil is low. Controlled short bursts are simple to master. The accuracy potential is excellent out to 400 meters and the hit probability by trained operators is very high. Fabricated by low-cost stamping methods, it is simple in design (with the possible exception of the trigger mechanism), robust and quite reliable under all anticipated environments. It's a pity a lightened version and its cartridge was bypassed by NATO for a less-desirable alternative. The world's first — and still finest — assault rifle deserved a better fate. ✕

IWO REUNION

Continued from page 47

but soon many of them changed sides to exchange bows, handshakes, photos and business cards with their counterparts. A former Marine rifleman seemed honored and privileged to meet a former Japanese Zero pilot. A Japanese artilleryman and American company gunnery sergeant exchanged wishes of peace, happiness and good fortune.

The veterans had returned to Iwo Jima, but not to take up the fight again. They were here to make peace — peace with themselves as well as with their one-time enemies. For many of the veterans the reunion might be just what was needed to put to rest some of the ghosts which have haunted them for years.

"After they took Hill 382 there were seven effective men left in my company," said retired Colonel Joseph J. McCarthy of Chicago, who landed on D-Day as a captain in the 4th Marine Division.

"Every day I think of those men. Coming back here was a sentimental journey and I think I owed it to the Marines that served under my command."

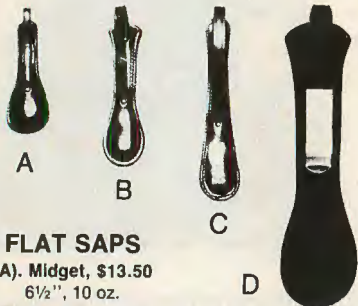
McCarthy received the Congressional Medal of Honor for exposing himself repeatedly to enemy fire while hurling grenades into enemy emplacements, and leading a daring assault on a heavily fortified ridge on February 21.

Landing as a hospital corpsman with the 5th Marine Division, Greg Emery of Peekskill, New York, saw more than his share of the dead, wounded, and dying. "Naturally I always think of my closest buddies. Those are the ones that always come to mind. The fellas who were killed are alive again. I think it's going to do us all good to come back and see how it is now."

The "Reunion of Honor" was over and with it came new memories of a peaceful Iwo Jima rather than ones of a savage battle 40 years ago. Concluded Lt. Gen. Cooper: "May this day and the image of the brave and loyal men gathered here serve as a symbol to all mankind. For if peace and friendship is possible among these men,

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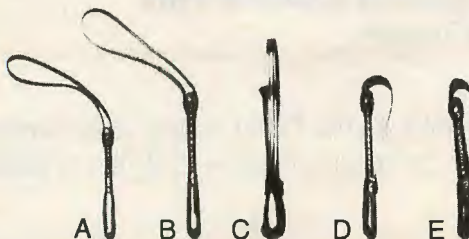
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For free convention information packet write: **SOF Convention, Inc.**, 4901 Indian Trail, Wilmington, NC 28403.

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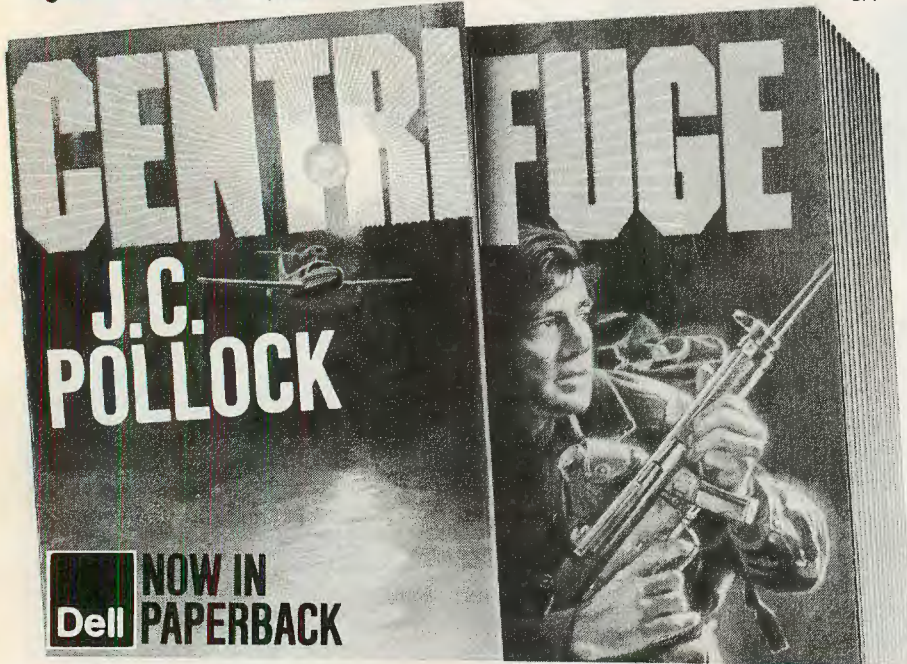
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then peace and friendship is possible everywhere in our troubled world."

BATTLE PLAN

On 19 Feb. 1945, Marines of the 4th and 5th Divisions (with the 3rd Marines in reserve) hit the beaches of Iwo Jima for a face-off that would leave over 40,000 Marines and Japanese dead or wounded. The battle that ensued was to become one of the most savage campaigns of World War II, and the costliest one ever recorded in the history of the Marine Corps.

Marines called it Hell: this seven-square-mile, ash-covered chunk of volcanic rock . . . and for good reason. But it was an important site in the Pacific Theater of operations. Iwo Jima was strategically located in the Bonin Island group about halfway between the Marianas and Japan and neither side was about to give it up without a fierce fight. The Allies needed Iwo Jima to serve as a permanent air base and emergency landing strip for fighter planes escorting B-29s on bombing missions from the Marianas to Japan. It would be a valuable half-way landing point for escort fighter planes that did not have the range of the larger craft.

The Japanese, prepared to defend Iwo Jima to the last man, had already built a complex tunnel system as well as concrete gun emplacements on Mount Suribachi. Iwo Jima was indispensable to Japan's inner defense system. Under the command of Lieutenant General Tadamichi Kuribayashi, it had become an armed fortress and the only way to bring it down was by amphibious invasion.

On the day of the invasion, 20,000 dug-in, supplied Japanese troops awaited the U.S. Marines in secured beach defenses. Their landing was met with gunfire from an enemy they could not see. Concealed anti-tank guns stopped tanks on the beach. Mount Suribachi spurted a hailstorm of fire onto the landing beach 600 feet below. In addition, the Marines were hampered by an unforeseen problem. The terrain was covered by a thick, black volcanic ash which made walking virtually impossible.

Kuribayashi's plan was simple: let the Marines inch forward onto the beach and then keep them there with incessant artillery and mortar fire. Do not counterattack. If they managed to penetrate farther, follow through with fixed guns.

Of the 30,000 U.S. troops that landed on Iwo Jima the first day, 2,500 were killed or wounded. The Marines had made a serious miscalculation. They believed that bombing and naval gunfire had wiped out much of Japanese defense installations. In fact, only 17 out of 730 were destroyed.

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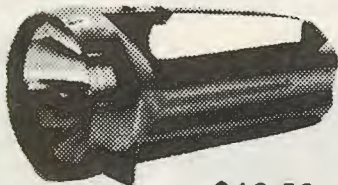
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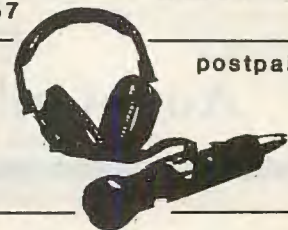
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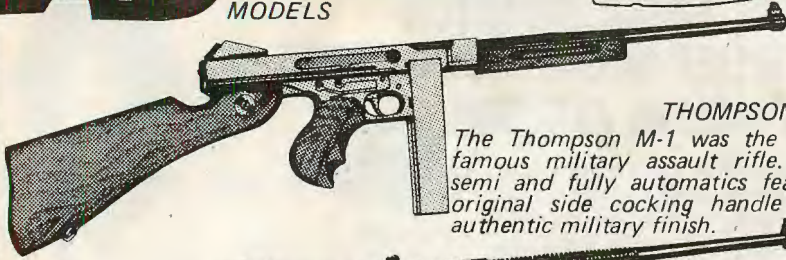
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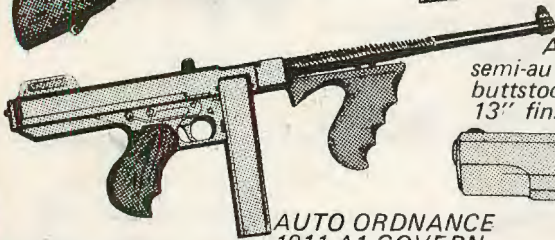


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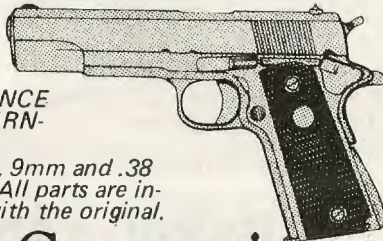
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all the troops landed. Then, when they were packed together on the tiny beach-head with nowhere to go, secured enemy troops opened fire with artillery and mortars and bled the ranks. Unable to move any farther, the Marines dug in and waited for nightfall.

At dawn, troops began their inch-by-inch assault against Japanese positions. Movement was slow but this time as they crawled forward they were prepared. Flame throwers and demolition charges in hand, the Marines took casualties in staggering numbers. Four days after the onset of the Battle of Iwo Jima, Mount Suribachi was scaled. A small U.S. flag was raised in victory atop Iwo Jima's highest peak.

Fighting continued for another two weeks as Marines penetrated enemy lines with devastating effect. Finally, on 16 March, 3rd, 4th and 5th Marine Divisions headed home, leaving behind a scarred, smoldering volcanic island and the memories of thousands of their fallen comrades.

— Kim McMichael



SCAPA FLOW

Continued from page 43

lamp on my flash, something white sparkled back in a doorway just

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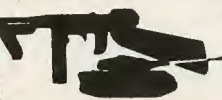
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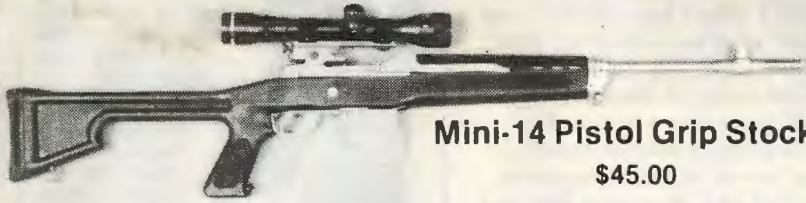
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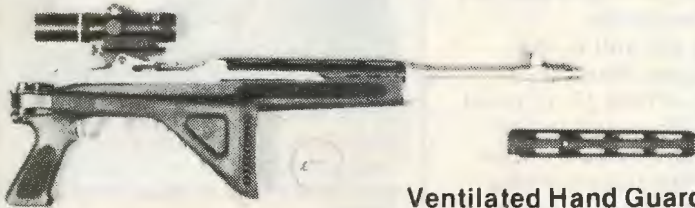
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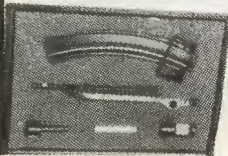
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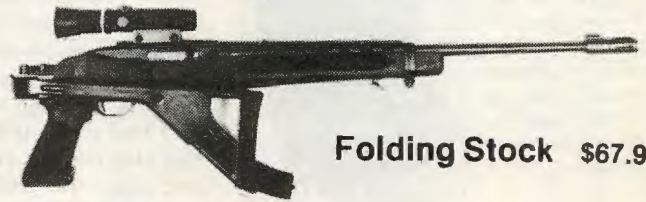
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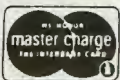
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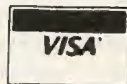
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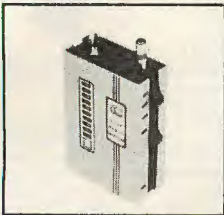
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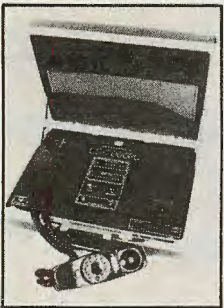
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opposite the ladder. I aimed my flash into the doorway. My mask almost flooded as I laughed. I was in the doorway to a head and the light had reflected off the porcelain of a toilet bowl.

Portholes and hatchways cast a magical spell on divers, luring them into a ship's bowels. Without the proper wreck-exploration gear, such penetration can be suicidal. Sixty-three years of rust and sediment swirl into a brown fog that no lamplight can penetrate. We were forced to limit ourselves to exploring and photographing the wrecks from the outside.

Moving along the hull of the *Brummer*, we came onto the forward battery of twin 15cm naval rifles. I was disappointed to see that the decorative muzzle covers were missing. Had someone else taken this prized souvenir earlier, or were they never used on the *Brummer*? I'll never know. Although the barrels were covered by a heavy layer of marine growth, I could easily make out the lands and grooves of the tubes. Behind the armor plating of the gun shields, I could clearly see where the breech-blocks had been removed. It doesn't take much to imagine the destruction that this ship was capable of inflicting.

We found the cruiser's superstructure and battle control tower to be in good condition. Since these ships had open bridges without any windows, there was no danger in exploring it in detail. The steering stand was still there, but the steering wheel was gone, as I had expected. I slipped into the chart room behind the bridge but came out with empty hands: no charts, no sextant, nothing. The *Brummer* had been stripped by previous visitors.

Behind the superstructure we discovered the number-one smoke stack broken off and lying on the bottom. It must have broken off during the sinking taking some deck-plating with it and opening a passage to the engine room below. A quick look around showed lots of vintage souvenirs. We wiped away a thick layer of sediment on a bulkhead and brought a brass nameplate into view. Since we had no tools with us, we left them where they were after taking a few pictures.

Finning along the deck we found the chutes that lead into the coal bunkers. The hatch-covers were missing and in the beam of our lights we could see football-size chunks of coal still hanging on the edges as if the ship had just sunk.

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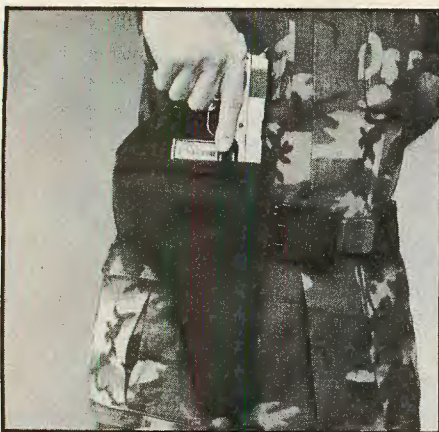
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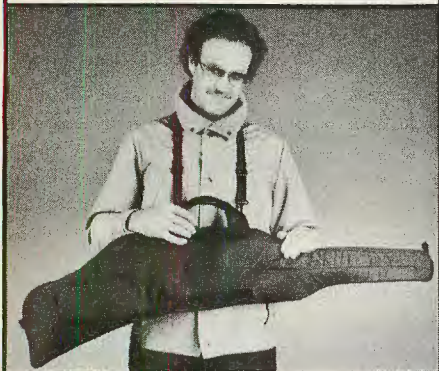
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A check of our pressure gauges showed sufficient air remaining so we took a quick drop down to the sandy bottom to take a look. Thousands of chunks of coal that had come cascading out of the coal bunkers as the *Brummer* had gone down littered the seabed. Here and there we found paraphernalia which was lost overboard during the sinking: a leather shoe, a wrench, a metal pan, a belt and other odds and ends belonging to German sailors.

One last check of our pressure gauges showed it was time to begin our ascent. Because the nearest recompression chamber is in Aberdeen, 1½ hours' flying time away, we strictly adhere to the U.S. Navy no-decompression dive times. Even though the depth and the time we were down did not allow our bodies to absorb too much nitrogen from our compressed breathing air, we all made a safety decompression stop of five minutes in 10 feet of water.

While we were decompressing I started to realize how little of the giant ship I had actually seen. The light cruisers displaced an average of 5,000 tons and the battleships some six times that or around 26,000 tons. Trying to get to know the S.M.S. *Koenig*, *Markgraf* or *Kronprinz Wilhelm* in one or two dives is impossible. A diver could spend two dives per day for two weeks and still not see everything on one of these great battleships.

One thing you can forget in your kit-bag when you come to the Orkneys is a hammer, crowbar, chisel and wrench. Everything that wasn't nailed or bolted down has already been picked off the wrecks by previous groups of divers and the dive-boat operators are not allowing any divers on the wrecks with tools. Many of the local residents who worked on the big salvage jobs between 1924 and 1939 have rather large private collections of souvenirs taken from the ships, everything from officers' sabers to soup bowls and cups.

After our dive gear was stowed and while the tanks were being filled for the afternoon dive, we got underway for our midday break at one of the many little towns scattered around Scapa Flow. In St. Marys I got a further lesson in the fascinating wartime history of this area.

Hoy Sound, Switha Sound and Hoxa Sound — the three navigable entrances to Scapa Flow — had been fitted with boom defenses and anti-submarine nets during the First World War to protect the

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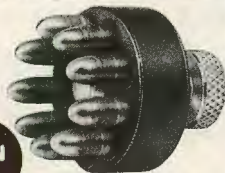
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British fleet from submarine attack. The remaining approaches to Scapa Flow, the passages between the smaller islands at the eastern side, were considered non-navigable for warships and were simply blocked by sinking ships' hulks in the channels between the islands. That did not prevent the German Navy from returning to the area for revenge during World War II.

On 13 October 1939, a German U-boat — the U-47 commanded by Gunther Prien — skillfully navigated the hazardous Kirk Sound at St. Marys and entered Scapa Flow. He was blessed with a full moon and an unusually high spring tide but there were serious problems. The U-47 drew 13 feet of water and the greatest depth Prien could expect in Kirk Sound was 20 feet. To complicate matters further, there was a 10-knot current running and the slack-water period, which was necessary to make the run through Kirk Sound, was expected to be only 15 minutes either side of high water.

Two nights before, without knowledge of U-47's mission, the Luftwaffe had flown a recon flight over Scapa Flow. Fearing an air attack, the British Grand Fleet left the area for the North Atlantic. When he finally entered the Flow, Prien made his way to the fleet anchorage off the Island of Flotta to find a lack of suitable targets.

The events that followed have caused considerable debate from that time until now but the facts are clear. While cruising on the surface, Prien discovered the silhouette of the veteran battleship *H.M.S. Royal Oak*. He fired a spread of three torpedoes at her and one of them hit the bow area. The other two missed. Turning 180 degrees, he fired one torpedo from the stern tubes. The torpedo hit the battleship but did not detonate. Turning his bows to the *Royal Oak*, Prien fired another spread of three torpedoes and was rewarded by three detonations.

As U-47 escaped undetected from Scapa Flow, the *Royal Oak* was sinking. Mighty explosions ripped the ship apart. She turned on her starboard side and slipped below the cold waters of the Flow taking 833 men to the bottom. Today, a buoy marks the site and an inscription on it reads, "This marks the wreck of H.M.S. Royal Oak and the grave of her crew. Respect their resting place. Unauthorized diving prohibited." The wrecks again beckoned us

and we were soon steaming across the Flow to the bay just north of Lyness on the island of Hoy to get back into the water — and back into history. When the trip was over, we had seen much of what Scapa Flow had to offer. But there would always be more. The Orkneys and the Kaiser's ghost fleet had us in their grip. ✕

WATERPROOF WEAPONRY

Continued from page 53

I have small regard for the Pachmayr rubber grips so in vogue these days. They permit no correction of any error in the initial grip under stress. Leave them to the gong shooters.

The pistol withstood 1,000 rounds with only some minute peening of the hammer's rear surface where it bounces off the beaver-tail grip safety. It remains ready for many thousands of rounds more. I can endorse the Randall LeMay unequivocally. It has become my primary sidearm when not on military operations. The suggested retail price is \$533. Extra magazines are priced at \$20.50 for the standard type and \$25.50 for the extended floorplate version. When working at the A-Camp recently in El Salvador — where these tests and evaluations were conducted — I frequently carried the LeMay pistol in "The Mercenary" shoulder holster made by Cattle Baron Leather Company (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 100724, San Antonio, Texas 78201). This is not a concealment rig. It will handle almost all of the popular big-bore auto pistols. A boot-knife carrier is attached to the other end of the harness. The holster, harness and carrier are made from extremely thick and tough top-grain cowhide, hand-rubbed with natural oils and double stitched for strength. The holster is lined with top-grain calf leather. The thumbsnap permits a pistol to be carried either cocked and locked or hammer down. The holster can be instantly detached from the harness for crossdraw or strong-side belt carry. The harness system can be adjusted for dwarfs through giants. The price is \$79.95. Elite military and police units from 21 countries use Cattle Baron holsters — with considerable justification.

COLT PYTHON

People that own Colt Pythons also wear Rolex watches and drive Porsches — or at least they should. Colt's prestige handgun was first introduced in 1955. It took me ten more years to gather up the \$75 I paid another starving graduate student for my first Python. Using a granite boulder as a rest, he had badly disfigured the 6-inch barrel. But, that didn't affect its performance one whit. A year later I upgraded to a new 4-inch model. I never really cared for six beans in the wheel, so, a year later, I traded it off for a Remington Rand M1911A1. I never owned another until now.

The first Pythons were available in Colt

Royal Blue finish, which matched the revolver's carefully fitted and tuned mechanism. Nickel-plated models soon followed. Coltgard was next. This was a satin finish produced by the electroless nickel process. It wasn't until two years ago that Colt brought out their first stainless-steel firearm. Naturally, it had to be a top-of-the-line Python.

It was well worth the wait. The very latest in stainless-steel metallurgy has been utilized. With the exception of some small components, such as the sights, portions of the trigger mechanism and springs, the new Python is fabricated from 410- and 416-series stainless, including the button-broached barrel and forged frame.

We purchased a 4-inch model off the shelf from Colt distributor Aeromarine, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 7605 Eastwood Mall, Birmingham, AL 35210). The ramped front sight, with red plastic insert, and white-outline, Micro-type, adjustable rear sight are matte blued steel. The top of the frame and barrel rib are glass beaded to produce a dull matte finish. The remainder of the pistol's exterior is satin polished (a mirror-polished version, called the "Ultimate" is available for \$10 more). The black rubber grips contrast nicely with the satin stainless finish. They are made by Pachmayr, but carry the Colt escutcheon. Rubber grips are more appropriate on magnum revolvers used for hunting or informal shooting. They should be replaced for law-enforcement use.

This model sells for \$724.95. Too much? Maybe not. Colt officials insist that a major portion of the Python's price has always been labor costs. The finish is impeccable. No tooling or forging marks remain anywhere on the visible portions of the weapon. The overall fit of the metal components is excellent. The ventilated rib is just as impressive as ever. But, I hate roll pins and it was disappointing to see the rear sight attached to the frame in that manner. Timing was perfect and remained so throughout the test. Colt long ago perfected the art of crush fitting the barrel to the frame and there is nothing to criticize in this area (which has recently caused another manufacturer serious problems).

The single-action pull weight is a consistent, drag-free 4 lbs. The double-action pull weight is a very smooth 10 lbs. with considerable "loading" at the end of the stroke, just before the break. Those who use a two-stage method for double-action shooting prefer this type of trigger. Those that don't can have the Colt Custom shop give them a Tedford custom double-action.

All of this is very much a part of the Python tradition. But only hits count. Except for its sporting applications, the Python is largely a police service handgun — and only within the confines of the borders of the continental United States, where the revolver still reigns sacrosanct with law-enforcement agencies. The auto pistol dominates the rest of the law-enforcement world.



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To this end, we chose as our test ammunition a cartridge developed for law enforcement applications. Interest in multiple projectile cartridges (exclusive of the shotgun) dates back to the SALVO Project of the early 1950s and beyond. Multiple Munitions Industries, Inc. (Dept. SOF, 230 Lafayette Street, Gretna, LA 70053) has developed an interesting 3-projectile loading in .38 Spl. and .357 Magnum. The primary projectile is a 110-grain jacketed hollowpoint (JHP) with a very thin specialty jacket designed to maximize expansion. It's backed by two secondary projectiles weighing 70 grains each. The total weight is 250 grains. H.P. White laboratory has measured the muzzle velocity at 1,064 fps.

MMI's objective was to create a round that would knock down any anticipated threat, but fail to penetrate body armor (as 20 percent of all police shootings are with their own handguns). They have succeeded admirably. Our tests in El Salvador demonstrated the following dispersion patterns through the 4-inch Python: at 3 feet there was no separation; between 6 to 15 feet the group size varied from 0.8 to 1.1 inches; from 18 to 27 feet the group went from 2 up to 3.7 inches. At 50 yards all the projectiles remained on the B27 police silhouette target. As the .38 Spl. round exhibits enhanced dispersion due to its lower velocity, its recommended maximum range is 35 yards. At normal pistol engagement ranges, 9-10 feet, the MMI round presents one inch of surface area at the moment of contact. Bad news for the bad guys. This is the ultimate entry round for SWAT teams, as it puts 3-shot burst control into a revolver. Two-projectile .45 ACP and 9mm Parabelum cartridges will be available by the end of 1985. They operate in submachine guns equally as well as auto pistols. There are no restrictions on the public purchase of MMI ammunition. It should make a great survivalist and hunting load. It has already literally blown 60-70 lb. javelinas off their feet.

We mated our Python with the nylon SAS-type leg holster manufactured by Elevated Urban Operations (Dept. SOF, 1904 Limbus Avenue, Sarasota, FL 33580). These people are well-known in police SWAT and military special ops circles for their line of tactical load bearing vests which can be ordered to carry accessories and ammo for everything from a 60mm mortar to a submachine gun.

The holster flap is secured by both a snap and velcro. An adjustable leg band goes around the thigh. The holster is attached to their unique parachute web belt, which is designed for emergency rappelling for short distances, as a rescue sling, tourniquet or just a very mean-looking belt on a set of fatigues. The holster is worn strong-side in opposition to a pouch holding three HKS speed loaders (HKS Products, Inc., Dept. SOF, 7841 Foundation Drive, Florence, KY 41042) and another pouch containing two magazines for your primary weapon. A small nylon strap goes from the belt to the holster's leg harness to stabilize the rig dur-

ing rappel. Available in O.D., black or camouflage, all of this equipment is outstanding and very comfortable.

Very interesting. Now all you have to do is to pick one of the above and you'll never have to clean another firearm as long as you live. Right? Wrong. Stainless-steel firearms need every bit as much attention after firing as do carbon-steel guns. Their virtue lies with their ability to withstand tropical assaults on them when carried everyday next to your sweating, stinking body in a fetid, dripping jungle or on a Coast Guard cutter off the Florida Keys. But, they still need to be cleaned after firing and lubricated periodically.

Dangerous as it is, I still use perchlorate ethylene ("perk" dry cleaning fluid) — in a well-ventilated area — to clean and degrease even stainless-steel firearms. Stainless-steel bores can be scrubbed with the same brushes and potions you use on carbon-steel firearms. Lubricants are a different ball of wax. Normal lubricants do not adhere to stainless-steel surfaces and we still need protection from friction and galling, if not rust prevention. Four products that I know of are specifically designed for stainless-steel firearms: CS Lubricant, Bullseye Gun Lube, RIG +P Stainless Steel Lube and BF oil. They all work. I prefer the BF low-viscosity oil for dropping into trigger mechanisms and other hard to reach places. RIG +P is excellent for bearing surfaces, such as the slide and frame contact areas.

So there you have it. What better place to test stainless-steel handguns than in El Salvador? We didn't leave the pistols overnight in a bedpan full of salt water. We didn't don scuba gear and attempt to fire them in a country club swimming pool either. No, we put them through their paces in the very real, very violent and very dangerous world of San Salvador, El Salvador, Central America where they were carried and used. All returned to the states without a blemish.

Based on those tests, I — and the Salvadoran Army officers and soldiers who participated in the tests and evaluations — can recommend both the Randall LeMay and the Walther PPK/S, if your anticipated user environment justifies the added expense of stainless steel. ✕

COMMAND GUIDANCE

Continued from page 2

you instead to the works of Hitler and Stalin, or perhaps to their most notorious understudies in the Western Hemisphere, Fidel Castro and Daniel Ortega.

The First Amendment guarantees five rights, as in Bill of Rights: Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the freedom of peaceable assembly and the freedom to petition the

government to correct perceived wrongs. Supporters of the Soviet-backed communist tyranny in Central America are trying to beat us with our own rules by exploiting four points of the First Amendment to abolish the fifth. In this manner they hope to gradually chip away at the human rights and privileges that put this country — despite its problems — head and shoulders above all others when it comes to personal freedom.

By their own admission, one of the primary goals of Witness for Peace and its allied groups is to put this magazine out of business: to blot out our freedom of the press. I have heard through various intelligence sources of communist-backed Cuban and Nicaraguan cadres who have discussed the viability of committing violent acts against the magazine and its staff members because of our outspoken support of anti-communist movements in Central America and elsewhere. We are not surprised that they have chosen instead a more moderate (and safer) alternative: propaganda and misinformation.

Their tactic is transparent. Such propaganda could never succeed without their ability to exploit freedom of religion, the right to free speech (whether their speech be true or not), the freedom to peaceably demonstrate against us in public and their right to lobby Congress. By using these basic tenets of democracy, they hope to destroy the freedom of the press that *Soldier of Fortune* and all publications in this country hold so dear.

Ask about freedom of the press in the Soviet Union. You'll only get "official responses" from the state paper, *Pravda*, or the Communist Party paper, *Izvestia*, because these are the only types of publications that are allowed to exist. *La Prensa* is widely acknowledged as the only paper in Nicaragua not absolutely under control of the state. Some days they print a blank front page because the content is censored by Sandinista communist officials.

More puzzling, however, are the U.S. church groups that allow themselves to be exploited by the communists in Nicaragua and El Salvador to serve the expansionist ends of the political masters in Moscow and Havana. These church groups supporting "refugees" from Central America tend to support only those people who speak of oppression by the popularly elected Salvadoran government or the anti-Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua. Never do we hear of these

religiously sponsored organizations helping out *campesinos* who have been victims of documented atrocities by the communist regime in Managua or the rebel terrorists in El Salvador. They don't mention the government troops in Nicaragua who pose as Freedom Fighters when they go out to rape and murder their own innocent citizens, or the rebel guerrillas in El Salvador who dress as government troops when they go into villages to execute mayors, destroy public property and terrorize the populace into support.

I can assume only one of two things about these church groups. Either they really are communists at heart, or they haven't read about the iron-fisted campaigns against organized religion in the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, North Korea, Vietnam, Poland, Nicaragua...

We know the leaders of groups like Witness for Peace are communists. And we intend to prove it. Watch for the story in *Soldier of Fortune Magazine*. ✕

TWO BATTLES

Continued from page 73

wounded were pushing me to get behind the cover of the bunker. I looked around for my

platoon and squad leaders but couldn't see them anywhere. Behind me, men were running out of the opening in the wire while other men were helping the wounded or dragging their dead comrades. Sometimes you would see two or three men running just as the American guns would fire. Their bodies just disappeared.

I knew that if I stayed where I was, death would soon find me so I finally got up and ran as fast as I could out of the wire and back across the field. There was a wounded man crawling across the field so I stopped another running man and together we picked him up and carried him back to the treeline. The man had been hit in the stomach and in the leg and we got some porters who bandaged him and put him on a hammock.

Things were hot even in the treeline because the Americans were shelling it also. Two or three shells were landing every few seconds. They were also firing phosphorous rounds and in a number of places the jungle was burning like a big torch. It was a terrible thing to see. There were wounded everywhere being carried on hammocks by porters or holding bandages to their own wounds. Most were moaning and crying from the pain.

I thought for sure we would all die there under the American shells, but our cadre managed to work quickly and organize the withdrawal. They took a different route than the one we had arrived on, traveling in the opposite direction through thick jungle. We were lucky because the Americans did not

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Helicopter resupply kept many remote American firebases alive during enemy sieges. Photo: AP/Wide World

arms or had been wounded in the face or stomach. Looking at them, I could not see how most of them could possibly live after being hauled on a hammock for miles. Many did bleed to death.

The bodies of the dead that were brought out were stripped of their personal belongings and valuables and then thrown into previously prepared graves nearby. There was no religious ceremony and two or three men were dumped into some of the holes, one on top of the other. I heard later that the cadre kept a list of the coordinates of the gravesites and that they were sent back to Hanoi so the bodies could be dug up after the war, but I could not see how they could possibly locate those graves years later.

I was happy to be alive but my joy quickly disappeared. While we rested at the village, I discovered that Duong hadn't returned with his platoon. Nor was he among the dead or the wounded. I asked a number of people if they had seen him, but no one had. When we got back to Cambodia, I talked with a man from another platoon who said he had seen Duong killed. The knowledge that Duong was probably lying in some unmarked grave far from his family and ancestors filled me with a great sadness. It also made me sad to think that even though Duong had hated communism, he had ended up dying for it. ✕

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detect our route and after a while, we were able to escape from the shelling.

An hour later, we came to another abandoned village. Here everyone rested for awhile. The medics went around bandaging wounds again and preparing the wounded for the journey to the hospital which was still miles away. Some of the wounded had only minor wounds, but there were many horribly mangled; many had lost legs and

FLAK

Continued from page 8

HAPPY READERS...

Sirs:

I want to thank and congratulate Peter Kokalis for the best article I have ever read on this 'parade horse' of the Belgian light weapons ('Belgium's Magnificent MG,' SOF, March '85). I also really appreciated Dr. John Padgett's piece ('Who Killed Pedro Chamorro?' SOF, March '85). I do not write your

magazine every time I read a good article but this time I had to make an exception. Thank you.

Hans Bombeke
Flanders, Belgium

Every month I must travel over 100 miles for my copy of *Soldier of Fortune*. It is well worth it. You guys just keep getting better and better. I particularly like Bill Bagwell's columns. I wish much prosperity to a great team and thanks.

Philip D. Skinner
Suffolk, England

Thank you, sirs. We appreciate your support, your kind words and going to the trouble to communicate them.

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AFGHAN REFUGEES...

Sirs:

No journal has responded as admirably as SOF in keeping the *Free World* informed on the events in Afghanistan since December 1979, nor has any organization been so forthright in seeking to assist the Afghan Freedom Fighters. I would like to bring to your readers' attention another great need that has



arisen as a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. I refer to the plight of more than four million refugees crowding the 300-plus camps along the Pakistan border. They need food and medical assistance. Donations may be sent to: Afghan Refugee Fund, P.O. Box 176, Los Altos, CA 94022. Thanks. James Hill Seattle, Wash.

SEEKING INFO...

Sirs:
I'm seeking information from SOF readers concerning battlefield incidents in which the carefully aimed fire of one or two infantrymen played a crucial role in the outcome of the fire fight. I'm also interested in accounts of military clashes in which the pistol played a deciding part. Include date of incident, unit and marksmanship training of involved personnel. Responses should go to Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 368. Thanks. F.L. Greaves San Rafael, Calif. 94915

RAMBO RAVE...

Sirs:
After reading your article ("Rambo: First Blood II," SOF, June '85) I went to see the movie. It was

an okay movie but the message was very strong. Thank you, Sly Stallone. Technically I found the movie to be very well-done until toward the end when he blows away the Soviet Mi-24A helicopter. He fires a LAW with a chopper full of POW/MIAs in back. What about the back-blast? They dropped the ball on that one. I've fired a few of those things and what comes out the back can ruin your whole day. Overall, though, I enjoyed the movie. Carry on. Your mag is tops.

Paul J. Brucker
Utica, N.Y.

WRITE A FREEDOM FIGHTER...

Sirs:
I must commend you on your efforts in Central America. Is it possible to have some kind of correspondence with the gallant rebels in this area? Are there ways to help them other than financial and material support?

Scott Bowen
Ellenwood, Georgia

SOF has received quite a few letters from readers who wish to get in touch with freedom fighters in Nicaragua. Getting mail in the field would be a great morale booster for these guys. But remember, many of them are in areas where mail cannot be delivered, most of them do not speak English, and some don't read or write at all. This would be a great contribution outside of sending



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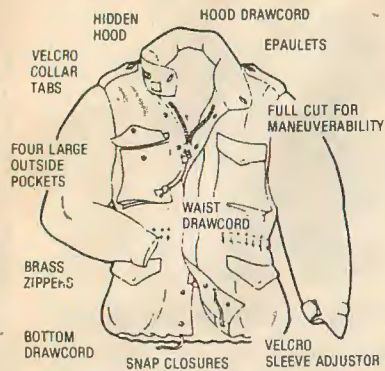
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SOF'S TIMELY COVERAGE...

Sirs:

As per your usual standard, the July '85 issue was excellent. Once again, SOF does what the so-called mainstream media will not do; cover in detail the conflicts ongoing in the world. Just recently, TIME magazine did a cover with Madonna on it. While TIME was monkeying about with some aberration like Madonna, SOF was covering the ongoing wars in the real world. I can guarantee that TIME wouldn't do more than a half-page on Cambodia.

Brian P. Dumas
Easton, Connecticut

Our readers have always been more interested in world affairs than the average reader of the major news magazines. We're glad our readers appreciate the difference in SOF.

THEY NEED YOUR HELP



Soldiers like these go into combat with worn-out boots, thin socks, no cleaning gear for their rifles, no poncho or poncho liner against torrential rains and worn-out web gear. They're troopers in the Salvadoran Army and Nicaraguan freedom fighters. Being brave, tough and willing isn't good enough without basic equipment. They need:

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BULLETIN BOARD

Continued from page 12

Afghanistan. And if it is free enterprise on this end that allows the transaction, clearly there is none at the delivery point. "Afghan Government Monopoly" is printed just below the brand name. Printed above it is "Made in U.S.A."

Soviet guards must get a good chuckle out of this while standing sentry duty, especially if they know that Uncle Sam doesn't even provide cigarettes to his own field troops anymore. Once included with coffee, toilet paper and gum in boxes of U.S. military rations, cigarettes were dropped from the packing list in the final years of Vietnam. Even non-smoking troops were displeased because cigarettes had made fine trading items and were popular among the native population.

Printed on the side of the pack marked for delivery to Afghanistan is "Tax-Exempt For Use Outside U.S." This means that U.S. smokers have to pay a federal tax on the foreign and domestic tobacco they consume

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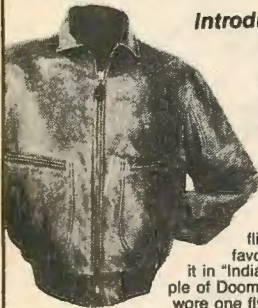


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while communist consumers in Afghanistan can get the best U.S. tobacco without any tribute to Uncle Sam's wallet. And when a customer like Afghanistan has a most-favored-nation trading status, U.S. companies can use imported tobacco grown in other countries (to the detriment of U.S. farmers) to make cigarettes in the U.S. for export to a foreign buyer, all without any import or export tax to the U.S. being paid.

Meanwhile, Congress spends additional millions of tax dollars every year subsidizing the tobacco industry, artificially supporting tobacco market prices in the name of the same "free enterprise" under which we sell cigarettes to a government which we are also spending millions to destroy.

Maybe the U.S. government is secretly hoping to slowly kill the Soviet tyrants in Afghanistan with lung cancer. The cigarettes they buy from U.S. companies do not have the Surgeon General's warning printed on cigarette packs sold in the United States. No doubt when they read this, State Department peabrains and Capitol Hill liberals will complain that by omitting this warning we are endangering the health of Russians in Afghanistan. For shame, for shame.

HONOR ROLL...

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MERCENARY ACCOUNTABILITY...

You'd think that accountants would understand mercenarism, wouldn't you? Well, it seems they don't.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of London, a professional body that ought to understand the advantages of free enterprise, have struck Congo and Seychelles mercenary Col. Mike Hoare from their rolls. Hoare — formerly a Fellow of the organization — said that he was surprised at the Institute's decision, since he had never embezzled a cent and his books were always in order. Few men, accountants or mercenaries, can make that claim.

MULE RECALL...

In their infinite wisdom, Pentagon leaders are re-inventing their old logistics mainstay, the pack mule. Special warfare buffs, mountaineers and sentimentalists who have followed the reactivation of the 10th Mountain Division were happy to learn that General John Wickham Jr. wants to re-authorize mules for the division after a 30-year hiatus. Who knows? If the Army gets *really* serious about the 10th, maybe they'll move the crag-crawlers back to the appropriately thin air of Camp Hale, Colo., from their present barracks at towering Fort Drum, N.Y. ☒

COLD STEEL

Continued from page 74

To accomplish this, Kali teaches you to be *extremely* aggressive. But at the same time, avoid any cut or thrust that makes you throw your weight behind the blow. These techniques require too much recovery time and leave your knife hand vulnerable.

Instead, concentrate on speed. Jab with the point. Cat-claw with snap cuts at anything unprotected. Vertical whipping strikes will prove especially hard to block.

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his guard without exposing yourself. And this is where feints and traps do their work.

See, there's a two-foot dead zone between a knife-fighter's offensive capability (his knife in his hand) and his vital organs. If you're going to win you have to bridge that gap. A distracting wound will do that. So will a low kick to remove his support. (Be sure you don't kick higher than his knee or your leg's the target.) Just don't forget, the idea is to cut him first and cut him fast.

Once he starts to bleed, move immediately into medium range: that distance at which you can easily reach your enemy's vital organs with your knife. Be sure you do this by either blocking his attack with your empty hand or by stepping in at an angle that carries you away from his blade.

When you safely gain middle ground, follow your first strike with a powerful cut to the weapon arm. The idea is to completely incapacitate that limb. If the abdomen is already vulnerable to your attack, thrust directly into that soft vital area.

Never forget, your own vital organs are in great jeopardy at this range. Even a man with his throat cut or stabbed through the heart can live 12 to 14 seconds, plenty of time to maim or mortally wound you.

In my opinion, your best chance to avoid counterattack is to step into your enemy's ground on completing your middle-distance assault, and move in close behind his back. If possible, kick the back of his knee to break him down. Then switch to a reverse or ice-pick grip on your knife.

This grip allows you to get the full strength of your legs, back and shoulder behind the blow, making it a snap to split the ribs or even the skull. Once in place, stab one of the kidneys (located on either side of the backbone just above the belt) and pump or twist the blade. Damage to the circulatory system and excruciating pain are so intense this blow can cause cardiac arrest.

If this target isn't handy, go for the heart (stab in under the left shoulder). Or if you're close enough, stab at the base of the skull and instantly sever the spine.

Once you start the final stabbing attack, don't stop until you are sure your enemy's dead.

Throughout the fight keep a firm grip on your knife hilt: You drop your knife and you lose your life. And use your body weight, not arm power to withdraw your blade after each insertion. Always remember the point is deadlier than the edge at close range and that people die fastest from multiple stab wounds.

Knife fighting is a toe-to-toe, bloody business that uses the natural weapons of the body as well as the blade. And learning to fight effectively is the product of long practice. For those of you who want a book on the subject, I suggest the *Philippine Martial Arts* by Dan Inosanto. (It is a little hard to understand if you haven't had formal instruction.) Inosanto's system added to disciplined training will improve your chances of living if you ever hold off death at the length of a knife. ✘

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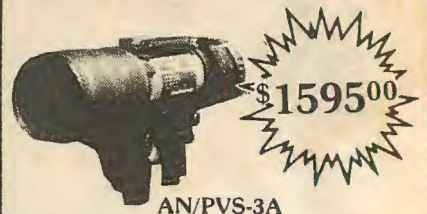
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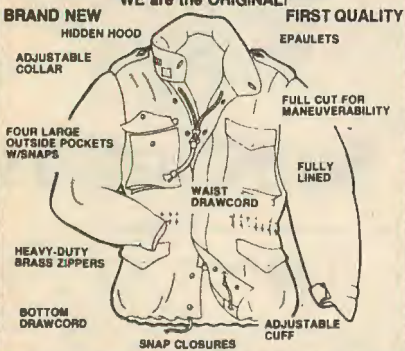
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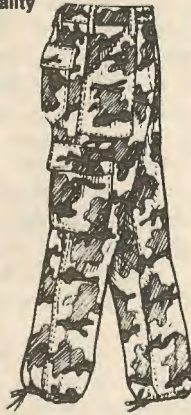
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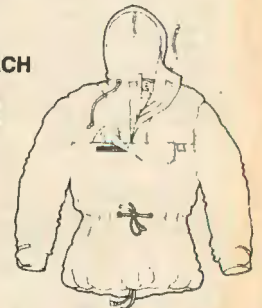
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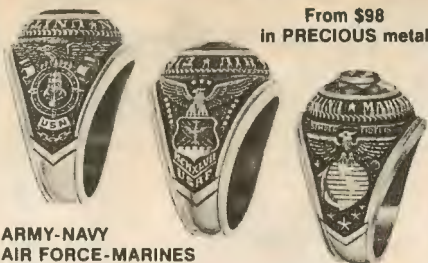


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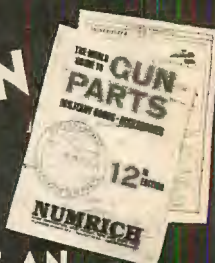
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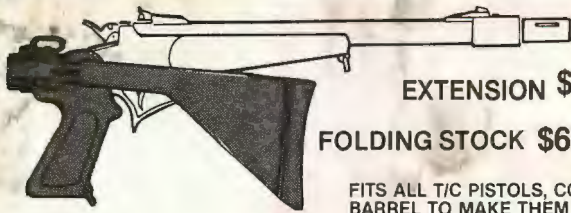
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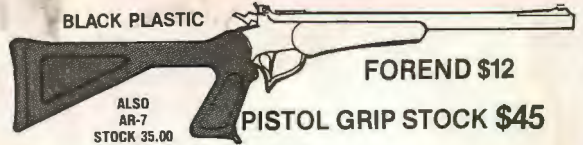
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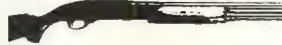
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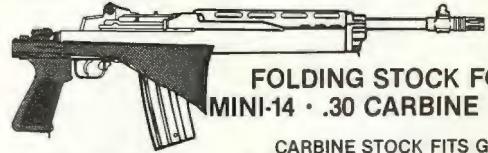


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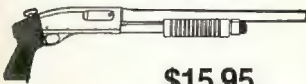
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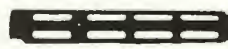


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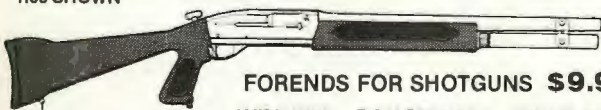
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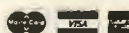
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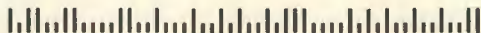
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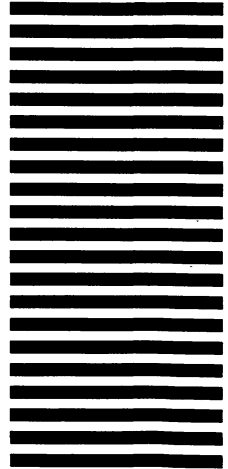
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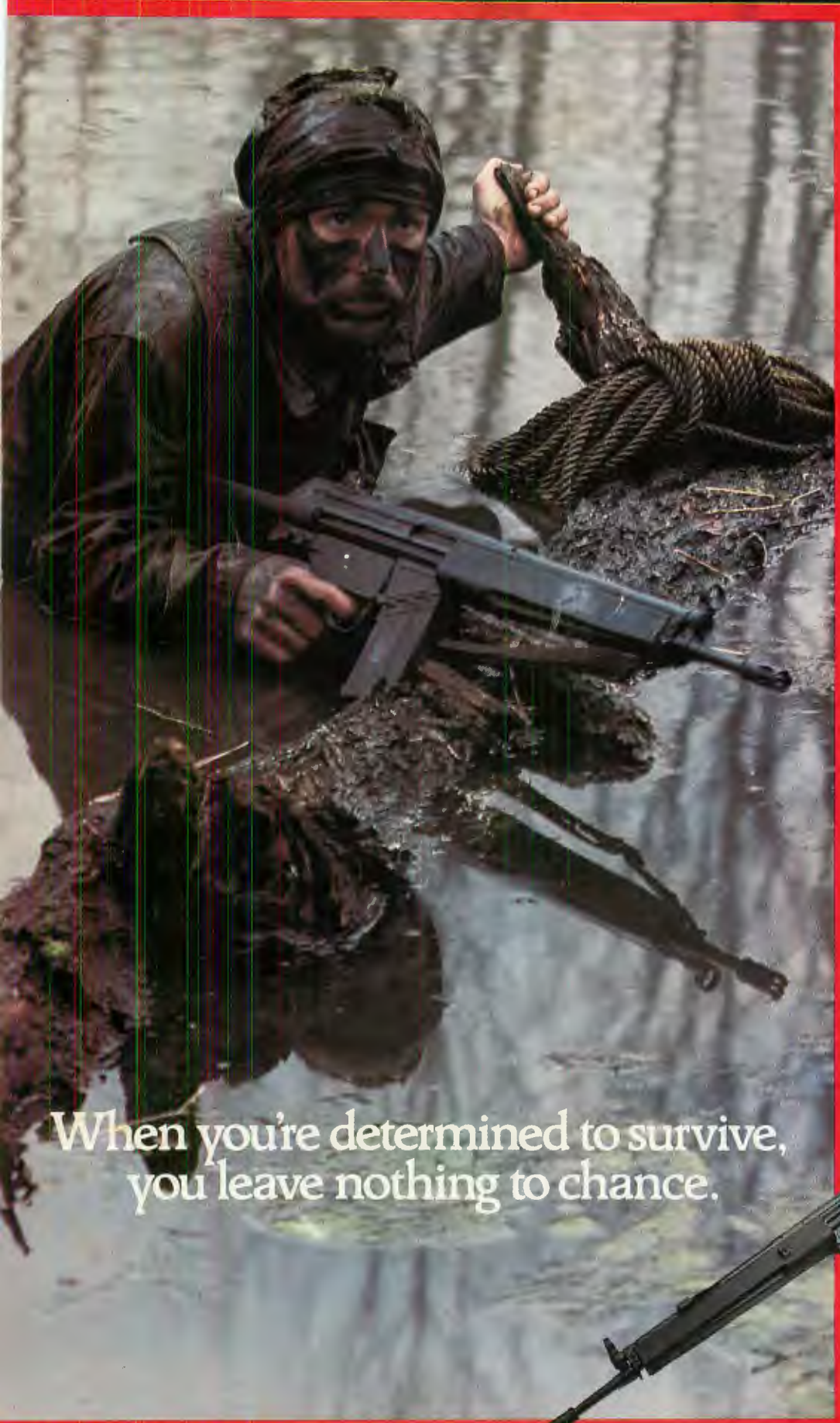
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